Portraits of Artists' Lived Experiences of Co-Creating Art

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Abstract

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Much has been said about what artists experience when they make visual art individually, but less has been said about what artists experience when they make art together. The study is based on the author's perception, elaborated below, that artistic co-creation in the visual arts seems to be regarded as less valuable than individual artistic creation. To explore and richly describe the experience of artistic co-creation from the perspective of artists themselves, I initially invited three duos of artists to create visual art together in an experimental, time-bound co-creation. After the onset of COVID-19, however, I amended the study by inviting participants to co-create art by virtually passing pieces of art to one another. I then interviewed them about their experience. Guided by a phenomenological approach, I conducted semi-structured interviews using questions sourced from the study purpose and related research questions. These interviews, held periodically through the co-creative project, sought to uncover the emergent themes of the experience of artistic co-creation. After reviewing the transcripts from these interviews, I created a representative written likeness of each duo experience, called a portrait, using the qualitative modes of portraiture. Six themes emerged from these portraits in the ways the artists reflected on their experiences of creating art together, including: moments of relationship and connection in the process of co-creation, the context and structure of the experiment, seeing experiences differently in the process of co-creation, finding agreements

between the perspectives of the co-creators, developing creative rhythms based on temporal parameters, and learning in the partnership of the project.

I did not begin this study with a formally-articulated conceptual framework, but I was influenced in my thinking by Basquiat and Warhol's relationship and subsequent collaborative artworks. This research contributes to the literature in key areas by examining existing assumptions about the value of artistic co-creation in the visual arts.

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Acknowledgements

Much like I learned in this study from my participants, although my name might be the one listed on the title page, I am but the amalgamation of the people and experiences that have pieced me together. My sponsor, Victoria Marsick, and first reader, Janet Ferguson, have been steady hands in a process that is anything but certain, and I cannot thank them enough for being there for me during this time. I would also like to thank the artists that participated in both my pilot study and dissertation study for sticking with me, even after funding disappeared. The arts are a part of our society that are constantly being asked to give, and I hope this experience was worthwhile to them. I would like to acknowledge and thank the faculty and cohort members of AEGIS XXVI for teaching me and learning with me over the last four years. Without their camaraderie, this dream might not have been possible. I would like to thank the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art for allowing me to conduct my pilot study on their grounds and for teaching me about Bermuda's rich artistic past, present, and future. Specifically at Masterworks, Tom Butterfield and Elise Outerbridge for their hours of dialogue and sense making about not only my study, but about how to bring people together through the arts in Bermuda. Funding this journey was a feat in and of itself. I would like to thank Michael Eisner and Martha E. Currie for their scholarship grants, which helped me enormously. Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their love and patient support over the last nine years of this academic odyssey.

E. C. W.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Initial Intrigue

Some years ago, I was perusing the Tate Modern in London as a budding art enthusiast. I vividly recall the moment I encountered a piece created by Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Not thinking much about it at the time, I remember reading the object label that suggested the piece resulted from a practice where the pair would send art back and forth to one another. Walking away from the piece, the thought lingered in my imagination about the duo's playful dynamic iterating on a canvas. Fast forward five years or so, and I was perusing a retrospective of Andy Warhol at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City where, sure enough, the same piece of art I had seen at the Tate was displayed next to yet *another* work created by the pair. In this instance, however, the object label simply noted that Warhol and Basquiat created the works and that the two were creative inspirations for one another. The notion that these historically important artists would have worked on the same canvas, at the same time, in the same studio, honestly never crossed my mind. Moreover, any deliberate attempt to mutually weave together an intentional work of art from two hands with such radically different aesthetics and perspectives seemed improbable to me at the time.

As an amateur artist, I remember thinking that surely these two professional artists did not paint *together*. From an outsider's perspective, the culture that seemed to emanate through the visual arts was one of individuality. As most casual art observers may anecdotally note, canvases displayed in museum settings are typically signed by just *one* person. In addition, museums have been erected in the memory of masters who are celebrated for their individual achievements, such as Cy Twombly (Cy Twombly Gallery at the Menil), Claude Monet (Musée

Marmottan Monet), Vincent van Gogh (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam), Ellsworth Kelly (The Austin, Austin Texas), Mark Rothko (Rothko Chapel at the Menil), and Pablo Picasso (Museu Picasso, Spain). Thus, over the course of my life, I had come to interpret canvas-based art as an individual activity. I really had not thought of co-creation as an artistic process, nor had I ever heard anyone talk about the value of painting with another person on the same canvas. When considering the creation of art, many individuals might agree with Kelly (2012), who noted the ideas of Carrie Barron in saying that "novelists or painters are largely solo operators. When it is pure art or self-expression or a deeply original idea that needs to be developed, solitude serves" (para. 13). Given my anecdotal observations and assumptions, I suppose this may be why it was so jarring for me to come across a photo, mid-way through my doctoral studies, of Warhol and Basquiat painting one of the pieces that I had seen at the Tate and Whitney side by side in the same studio. I would go as far as to argue that these pieces are, in fact, not Warhol and not Basquiat, but *both*, creating something *new*.

The experience of Warhol and Basquiat was not always of interest to the art world and beyond. The two master artists in their own rights intentionally co-created over 140 paintings, many of which were ultimately denigrated by art critics of the mid-1980s (Raynor, 1985) and resulted in Basquiat being dubbed an "art world mascot" (p. 22). However, more recently it seems like these works are starting to gain importance. As Evans (2019) notes:

> Although there was a great deal of pushback against the art and criticism of the artists' relationship through this collaboration, it was a pleasure to view their exchange with contemporary eyes. (p. 25)

Agreeing with Evans, I argue that one should take a more serious look at co-creation, as Warhol and Basquiat presumably would not have spent so much time painting together if they did not believe they had discovered something interesting. As world-class artist Keith Haring (1988) notes:

> The collaboration paintings [by Warhol and Basquiat] are a physical conversation happening in paint instead of words ... the sense of humor, the snide remarks, the profound realizations, the simple chit-chat all happened with paint and brushes. (para. 1)

The co-created works between Warhol and Basquiat were based on provoking the art viewer to think differently about art objects that were the byproducts of relationships (Bazan, 2017). Bazan writes that the partnership of Warhol and Basquiat was not:

> so much the painting itself, it's the collaboration itself that matters. They show Warhol taking yet another step to undermine the standard notions of unique authorship, which he'd done since his first Pop experiments. (para. 12)

Warhol's personal journal, written after he and Basquiat exhibited their co-created work in 1985 at the show Paintings, at the Tony Shafrazi Gallery in New York, provides some illuminating context. Excerpts from his journal describe how Basquiat was confused about why the art world rejected the material they had created: "He really thought he was finally going to be appreciated; instead, they tore the show apart and said these horrible things about him and Andy and their relationship" (Sawyer, 2017, para. 31). Furthermore, Basquiat believed that their dynamic relationship would translate onto the canvas (Hermann, 2019). Instead, the show was panned by critics (Raynor, 1985), which caused Basquiat to feel that his work was not appreciated. Ultimately, this led to the demise of Basquiat's relationship with Warhol before his untimely death (Hermann, 2019).

In considering the rejection at the time of the co-created pieces *writ* large and the show Paintings in 1985, I cannot help but to wonder how Basquiat's race might have played a role. Basquiat was a Black man and, while there is no validation of this in writing, this omission of the relationship between race and the art community's criticism of the show is noteworthy for several reasons. First, if we consider the rejection of Warhol and Basquiat's relationship in the context of oppressive systems, the silencing of minority voices or narratives in this case makes sense. As Basquiat noted in his journal, "It all depends on who you are on what street" (Basquiat

& Warsh, 2015). Second, if we consider the art that Basquiat made during his life, it could be interpreted that he was visually expressing his experiences of rejection and denigration as a Black man living in America that the co-created pieces also received (Basquiat & Warsh, 2015). As Basquiat noted in his journal, "The dream will never die accept the reality of living in the states" (Basquiat & Warsh, 2015). Lastly, Basquiat died at the very young age of 27 due to a drug overdose he suffered as he struggled to cope with the public reception of the show Paintings and the subsequent demise of his relationship with Warhol. It is not known at the time of this study whether he wrote about his thoughts or experiences of the show and the co-created pieces prior to his death.

I know one day I'll turn the corner and I won't be
Ready for it-
I was cursed from birth.
Popular cheerleaders
I played their part
An orphan If you know my counterparts
A bit too bitter
Naïve to the point or 10 or 11
Physical compitition [sic]. (Basquiat & Warsh, 2015)

Pilot Study

Wanting to learn more about what happens when artists co-create, I conducted a pilot study. As described above, this decision arose because, based on my own observation, a unique phenomenon seemed to exist in *canvas-based art* where the art was nearly always purported to be created on an individual basis. To further understand this phenomenon, I conducted an action research-based pilot study in the spring of 2018 with the first purpose-built Art Museum in Bermuda. The study was entitled, "*How can art communicate a shared sense of place, space, and self?*" and utilized three data collection methods, including a questionnaire, guided museum walks, and four co-creation sessions with professional artists.

In the questionnaire, I collected 32 photos of Bermudian and non-Bermudian Art and asked stakeholders of the museum to select whether the piece reflected their own identity, the identity of the sponsoring museum, a Bermudian identity, or was non-applicable. I was curious to understand how stakeholders of the museum would relate to the art that the museum holds in its collection. Additionally, I wanted to see whether the selected images could tell us something about how individuals saw themselves and if any patterns would emerge. For instance, I inserted several images into the questionnaire that were more abstract than anything that currently exists in the museum collection. I also wanted to explore whether stakeholders might select these abstract images to represent parts of their own identity, a Bermudian identity, or the identity of the museum.

In the guided museum walks, I conducted six individual interviews, where patrons of the museum were audio-recorded as they walked around the exhibition and spoke about images that corresponded to their own identity, a Bermudian identity, or the identity of the museum. The data were then transcribed, coded, and analyzed using a qualitative methodology.

In the co-creation portion of the pilot study, I facilitated four sessions that included three local professional artists in each session. In each of the sessions, participants followed a protocol that I designed. The sessions started with 30 minutes of creating a piece of art that the participant felt represented their individual identity. The participant would then pass their piece to the second artist in the group, who would alter the piece for a further 30 minutes to reflect Bermudian identity. The project concluded with passing the piece to the third artist, who would spend a further 30 minutes altering the piece yet again to reflect the identity of the sponsoring museum. After the conclusion of the 90 minutes, I facilitated an audio-recorded reflection

session, using a semi-structured interview protocol. Responses were analyzed using the same qualitative methodology as the guided museum walks.

While all data collection methods were designed with the intention of benefitting the museum, I found that the co-creation sessions were the most impactful. For instance, the findings suggested that participants reported feeling the global context of the work, developing more alignment and forgiveness, overcoming fear, and building self-awareness. However, what intrigued me most was that, while I designed the co-creation sessions based upon an assumption that the professional artists would be accustomed to working in partnered formats, this was not the case. When I prompted the participants to share their work with another artist, they were clearly uncomfortable. However, despite the discomfort, the art products they created during the collaborative sessions were surprisingly coherent and complex—so much so that some of the participants requested to have the pieces returned to them when the study concluded.

Research Problem

My curiosity for this topic began via anecdotal observation. Upon perusing several significant art museums around the world, I observed that virtually all historically significant canvas-based art that I learned about is signed by a single master artist. Given the amount of co-creation that exists in other domains of the arts, such as dance, theater, and music, I was struck by how little co-creation seemed to be overtly occurring in the visual arts, if it was occurring at all. The artists' experience in my pilot project seemed to confirm this lack of co-creation. Thus, I felt compelled to explore whether I could understand the context of what I viewed as a practice of individual endeavor, specific to the culture in the discipline of canvas-based art; and to better understand what the experience of co-creation of canvas-based art.

I intended to study co-creation in canvas-based art by inviting artist pairs in Bermuda to experiment with artistic co-creation and to study their lived experience by conducting a phenomenology. Consistent with the method, I did not begin with an extended literature review because it might unduly influence fresh perceptions of the experiences studied. I instead reviewed literature after data collection and analysis in order to create a fuller picture of the lived experience depicted in the research study.

As I explored literature relevant to artistic co-creation in art history, I learned that while studies on co-creation in art are scant, collaborative art was extensively discussed and researched in the art history literature, which was, therefore, helpful in locating the study in the arts literature and identifying the problem that had initially intrigued me and that I had anecdotally noticed regarding artistic co-creation. While theorists and critics have different definitions of collaborative art in different contexts, the literature in this area largely dismantles the Western mythology of the lone artistic genius toiling away at his work in isolation. Though that mythology of the individual still influences the cultural narratives surrounding art, this phenomenological study can be seen as contributing to a body of research that is more inclusive of other modes of collaborative artmaking.

More specifically, however, this study can be seen as contributing to research on one particular form of collaborative artmaking, co-creation—which I define in terms of artistic autonomy between a pair of artists, and the potential for a double signature on a single canvas—by describing the experiences of artists who have an equal hand in creating a single canvas-based work of art. Within this context, this study also contributes to research on adult learning by raising questions about how or whether artists learn as they are engaged in co-creating art.

Learning, in this study, is framed as Mezirow's (1991) understanding of meaning-making and "revised interpretation[s]" of an experience (p. 12).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of artistic co-creation within the context of a sample of Bermuda artists invited to collaborate in creating art in order to study their experiences of doing so. Additionally, this study sought to elucidate whether and how learning occurred during the experience in the face of pressure to co-create rather than pursue individual endeavors. The study raised questions, as well, as to whether or not findings about artistic co-creation might be relevant to educational professionals in other fields and contexts.

Research Questions

Throughout Chapter 1, I have attempted to examine a phenomenon that seems to exist within canvas-based art, relating to the widespread cultural attribution of creativity to individuals and the denigration of the value of co-created art. This localized phenomenon is particularly puzzling, as it is juxtaposed with our world becoming increasingly more collaborative, especially in modern professional contexts. Thus, the purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of artistic co-creation as a living phenomenon. The research questions were designed to learn more about the complexity of that experience in the specific context of artists who live and practice their art in Bermuda.

- RQ1: What do artists in Bermuda experience who voluntarily engage in an experimental, virtual process of co-creating art?
- RQ2: How, if at all, does co-creating art provide the opportunity for learning?
    - RQ2a: What are the components in co-creation that allow for learning to occur, if at all?

- RQ2b: What is the quality of that learning?

Research Design

Based on these research questions, my original design was phenomenological. I initially planned to invite a small sample of Bermuda artists to pair up in dyads and collaborate on canvas-based art co-creations in order to research their lived experiences. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, I had to modify the design by recruiting a small sample of Bermuda artists who agreed to collaboratively co-create art of their own choosing but who could not do so in person. They, instead, collaborated on the ideas behind the art, then worked separately while passing the artwork back and forth electronically as needed. After completing the artwork, I collected data about the artists' experiences by conducting semi-structured interviews, from which I produced transcripts for review.

Researcher Assumptions

In terms of my personal context, I am an amateur artist who writes and paints, but I do not sell or display my art in gallery settings, nor am I subject to the financial parameters of process-oriented artmaking that I will discuss in the literature review. Additionally, I am not an art critic. My assumptions, insights, and perspectives are shaped by the lens of adult education theory and practice. In line with the tradition of adult education and adult learning, this research reflects a multiple and cross-disciplinary approach to inquiry and reflection. It is against this background that I drew on disciplines outside my field of studies, such as the visual arts and arts pedagogy. It should be noted that, while the study was situated in the discipline of art, particular attention was also focused on the learning artists might experience through this process. In this way, the study was first and foremost grounded in the field of adult learning. Key assumptions I brought to the study included the following:

- I hold a value of diverse perspectives for co-creation and for learning that might occur in the co-creation process.
- I believe that reflective learning is more effective when undertaken with others.

Researcher Perspective

In my professional practice, I am an Organizational Development and Leadership consultant. Academically, I began my undergraduate education at the University of California, Berkeley, where I majored in English, with a focus in poetry, and minored in rhetoric. I transferred to Harvard University in 2012, where I received a Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Psychology, with a focus in Adult Development. I then received a Master of Arts from Teachers College, Columbia University, in Social-Organizational Psychology, and I am currently a certified doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, in Adult Learning and Leadership.

I have spent my entire career in financial services and, given that background, it is not necessarily a surprise that I am curious about co-creation and creativity. They are part of my everyday experience as a consultant inside large, global organizations that are trying to get work done as efficiently as possible while innovating and staying ahead of their competitors. Although not a professional artist, I do consider myself an amateur artist, and I have just begun to experiment with canvas-based expression.

Recently, I also started spending time in museum settings as a volunteer due, in large part, to my pilot study in 2018. From a cultural perspective, I was born in Canada, raised in Bermuda, and educated in the United States. I now reside in Bermuda, a colony of the United Kingdom. From a professional qualification perspective, I am certified as a small-group consultant from Group Relations International, founded by René Molenkamp; I am a certified

Executive Coach from the A-N Network, founded by Simon Western; I am a certified Design Thinking facilitator from the Columbia Design Studio; and I am pursuing certification from Cultivating Leadership/Growth Edge Coaching, founded by Jennifer Garvey Berger.

With regard to how co-creation fits into my own life, I have found that the most meaningful outcomes within my life have come from instances of shared learning in which I was able to forge close, meaningful partnerships or bonds with others. I would argue that this way of partnering has led me to achieve much deeper personal discovery and growth than I would have otherwise achieved alone. So, while I am interested in co-creation, I am also interested in the potential learning that occurred within the participants over the course of this study. Relative to adult learning theory and my field of work, recognizing the impact of adult learning is beneficial to advancing educational and professional approaches to co-creation.

Rationale and Significance

Although the focus of this study was predicated upon an apparent void of co-creation within the visual arts, we should note that, in contemporary education, Freire's (Lewis, 2014) notion of conscientization in the context of literacy relies on the cultivation of a dialogical engagement between teachers and learners and across learning groups. A humanist, Freire set out to deliberately challenge deeply rooted hierarchies embedded within the traditional pedagogical practice and proposed an alternative intersubjective inquiry and collective meaning-making as a means for emancipatory learning. His notion of learning circles (Lewis, 2014) might, in some ways, be akin to co-creation. Although not exactly the same concept, there may be corresponding features that draw attention to the sensorial and, consequently, the aesthetic dimension of learning.

This study's significance emerged out of a recognition of the value of partnered learning in educational and organizational spheres that are faced with an increasing urgency to resolve complex, multi-faceted problems. Additionally, there seems to be an emerging overall shift away from privileging the traditional Western celebration of independent application and achievement, in favor of the recognizing the value of the multifaceted output of partnerships. The findings from the study might help inform others who find themselves in similar positions, attempting to work together in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity.

List of Definitions

Keywords that have been used and are found within my research questions are: "how," "learning," "describe," "experience," and "co-creation." Use of the word "how" denotes my openness to anything that might emerge about co-creation over the course of my interviews and interaction with participants.

In defining "learning," I looked to Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, in which he defines learning as "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (p. 12). Based on that definition, I use "describe" to refer not only to the low-inference perceptions of the participants within the experience but what these experiences mean to them.

"Experience" is being used as a way of indicating that I was seeking comprehensive stories from each research participant of how they perceived and described the meaning of their lived experience of co-creating art during the course of the study.

While I extensively examine "collaborative art" and "co-creation" in the literature review, I generally define collaborative art, in this section, as artmaking that encompasses all divisions of collective labor. "Co-creation" is being used in this study to denote the participative

process and outcome of partnered creation. Mary Parker Follett (cited in Graham, 1995) argued for the principles of co-creation as "'power with' ... whereas power usually means power-over, the power of some person or group over some other person or group, it is possible to develop the conception of power-with, a jointly developed power, a co-active, not a coercive power" (p. 103). In comparison to collaborative art, I specifically use the word "co-creation" to describe a mode of art-making in which two artists have equal power and equal influence on the finished product.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

> Objects have something to say to us - this is common knowledge among poets and painters. Therefore, poets and painters are born phenomenologists. Or rather, we are all born phenomenologists; the poets and painters among us, however, are capable of conveying their views to others, a procedure also attempted laboriously, by the professional phenomenologist. We all understand the language of objects. (Van den Berg, translated by van Manen, 1997, p. 41)

Introduction

In *Phenomenological Research Methods,* psychologist and theorist, Clark Moustakas (1994), suggested that investigators in phenomenological studies should not perform a literature review prior to the inquiry in an effort to "abstain from making suppositions, focus on a specific topic freshly and naïvely, construct a question or problem to guide the study, and derive findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection" (p. 45). Fry et al. (2017), however, argued that it is in fact possible to conduct a review or relevant literature in *modified* phenomenological research that seeks to maintain a naïve frame of reference while simultaneously being aware of existing commentary around the phenomenon of interest. Fry et al. suggested that the researcher must continually acknowledge their embeddedness in the study—that is, their "particular subjective context" (p. 4)—while approaching the phenomenological literature review through *delineating*.

Chapter 2 begins by delineating and describing my embeddedness in the study and making explicit my initial interests and agenda. Several areas of literature were appropriate to consider in scaffolding this inquiry. These areas of literature include: an introduction to collaborative art making, the distinction between collaboration and co-creation in art, and the

historical origin, purpose, and problems within this mode of artmaking. The literature on collaborative art ends with a discussion of the conceptual framework of the co-created work by Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Theoretical grounding for the inquiry comprises an overview of phenomenology, including origins, philosophical principles, and the relationship between phenomenology and postmodernism. These areas of literature were included because they were helpful in initially orienting me toward the phenomenon of interest; what, if any, attempts have been made by professional artists in the past to co-create; how art has functioned in the contexts of learning and pedagogy in the past and present; and how using the research attitude of phenomenology might help shed light on the experience of co-creation for artists while revealing any potential learning that may have emerged during the study.

In order to conduct the literature review in this chapter, I used the Columbia (CLIO) online database to search for literature, using keywords such as *art and learning, co-creation and art,* and *phenomenology and art*. In the course of completing revisions, Dr. Richard Jochum, who served on my committee, identified and shared with me some key literature on collaborative art making, and, after reviewing those resources, I searched CLIO once again using the keyword *collaborative art making*. I then used internet search engines and online library assets, such as Google and CLIO, with the same keywords to find relevant articles, news articles, and blog posts. Lastly, I visited several art museums to view installations and browsed through their bookstores for literature that seemed relevant to this inquiry. The resulting literature is primarily in the form of electronic texts, art books, and articles.

Delineating

Delineating can be defined as the practice of researching by acknowledging one's embeddedness in a chosen topic, while simultaneously maintaining a *naif* or naïve stance toward

the phenomenon of interest. Delineating also involves the researcher acknowledging existing academic views, exclusive of the potential constraints that these views might impose. Fry et al. (2017) suggested that:

> the phenomenologically inclined researcher be mindful of, and make explicit, personal interests and agendas, [toward] a more 'disciplined' transparency of theoretical interests … a literature review in a phenomenological study plays a role in making clear not only the academic need to study the phenomenon, but also the researcher's interests and [processual] agenda in approaching the study that are either congruent with or different from the methods that have already been pursued and are articulated in the pertinent literature. (p. 5)

To begin delineating, I have always frequented museums, galleries, libraries of rare manuscripts, and architectural structures from my two favorite Franks: Frank Gehry and Frank Lloyd Wright. One day, however, I made the anecdotal observation, or realization, that virtually all the historically significant canvas-based art I had experienced in museum settings was signed by one master artist. Given my background, I immediately thought about the amount of co-creation that exists in other artistic domains, such as dance, theater, and music. I was struck by how little co-creation, in contrast, seemed to be overtly occurring in the domain of canvas-based art, if it was occurring at all. Furthermore, when I ventured out to prove myself wrong and that intentional co-creation was in fact taking place much more frequently than I imagined, I encountered how difficult it is to find co-created art objects in New York City at any of the prominent galleries or museums.

As a doctoral student embarking upon a dissertation and needing a topic, the timing was right for me to try and understand more about what might happen if artists *were* to try and co-create on the same canvas and to document their experiences. I also felt compelled to explore whether I could understand the origins and contexts for what I viewed to be a norm, and maybe even a preference, for the display of art objects that were the result of individual endeavor. Thus, my intention as a researcher became to create and facilitate an experimental container for

professional artists to participate in the co-creation of art, so that I might learn more about what artists experience who do in fact co-create. So, I waded through the literature, looking for examples from the art world where existing co-creation might exist. I remained *naïf*, in that I was not looking for literature to tell me what to do or how to think, but instead to orient myself enough that I was current and could recognize important markers of the experience as they presented themselves.

Collaborative Arts

Introduction to Collaborative Art

While I sought to uncover more about what happens when artists co-create, this study also found itself highly relevant to existing inquiry on collaborative art-making. Thus, it is necessary to situate this study of co-creation within the context of existing scholarly literature on collaboration in the arts. As this study is interdisciplinary, merging the arts and social science, Dr. Richard Jochum, a reader on my dissertation committee, referred me to relevant literature on collaborative art following the study, and, after reviewing that literature, I became aware of the significant amount of theoretical literature on the topic. This literature review offers context and shines a light on existing, important questions within current art pedagogy and practice related to both collaborative art practices.

Definitions of Co-Creation and Collaboration

In the literature, formal definitions of co-creation are limited, but scholars have used the language of co-creation in research on process painting and the performing arts. While I discuss that research in Chapter 5, Ind and Coates (2013) have, more generally, written of co-creation as a "force for participation and democratization … rather than simply an alternative research technique or a way of creating value through co-opting the skills and creativity of individuals"

(p. 92). In contrast to co-creation, the participation and democratization within "collaborative art" is generally contingent upon specific artists and time periods and is, ultimately, more encompassing than co-creation. In defining collaborative art, Crawford (2008) argued that collaboration has replaced the language of "the collective" (p. x), and multiple theorists agreed with this assessment that "collaboration" was a "relatively new word" (p. ix) for an older concept. While many of the theorists went on to contextualize this "new word" (p. ix) in the history of modern, western individualism, Earnshaw (2017) identified six "constituent elements of collaboration" that emerged and reemerged throughout the literature regardless of context:

- Motivation—the objectives and benefits of the project
- Communication—dissemination of information about the project
- Sharing—ideas and an understanding of their ownership
- Support—how the collaborators can help each other
- Problem solving—getting round difficulties or changes in direction in the project
- Diversity—utilizing a variety of skills and expertise when required. (p. 10)

Kester (2011) situated collaboration in a lengthier history of non-diverse, pre-modern collective art-making, writing,

> Collaboration is a part of modernism, which is identified with the emergence of the solitary genius out of the lumpen collectivity of the medieval guild or lodge.... The future of (European) art from this point on was preordained as the titanic struggle of progressive individualism. (p. 3)

Green (2001), on the other hand, wrote that "Modernist artists worked in revolutionary collaborations and subversive collectives, but [that] these projects were invariably recuperated in the literature by the cult of individual genius" (p. xv). Ultimately, Kester (2011) went on to corroborate Green's (2001) reading in other sections of his text, writing that there is a "semantic slippage between positive and negative connotations" of collaboration as signified through the

history of both forced collective labor work and peaceful cooperation (p. 2). Kester ultimately concluded that there were "no universal signifiers" to collaboration because "co-option, compromise, or complicity" were inherent in any art practice (p. 3).

Other theorists defined collaboration in the language of Earnshaw's (2017) "problem solving," "sharing," and "communication" (p. 10). John-Steiner (2000), for example, framed communication in the context of social psychology and dialogue, and Barok (2009) similarly wrote of a "co-authorship" through which artists made joint decisions about their work (p. 3). Writing on relationality in a wider context, Bacharach (2016) defined collaboration as "a means of navigating broader political and social knowledge" (p. 1).

Other theorists, of course, wrote about the art object or objects that emerged from collaboration rather than the art-making process. Crawford (2008), for example, defined the collaborative process in terms of a "goal" (p. x) or "a "specific end" (p. xi), but ultimately Crawford extended the definition of a single-end object to "many artists working as part of a collaborative effort" (p. xiii), sometimes separated by time or space. Green (2001) concluded that collaboration could result in—not merely a single project representative of two separate artistic styles—but a different project "that may or may not be consistent with the artists' solo" work (p. x) and may even "manipulate the concept of signature style itself" (p. xiii). Based on these theoretical definitions, it is clear that, while collaboration very clearly involves working together, the semantics of collaboration are more difficult to define.

Why Artists Collaborate

From the outside, I found that "the figure of the singular, auratic artist, reinforced by notions of artistic genius first formalized by Kant, remains the bulwark of the long history of

modernism, and the epistemological template for much contemporary criticism and curatorial practice" (Kester, 2011, p. 3). However,

> artists have used collaboration to complete large-scale works for centuries, even though the public perception is often that artists work alone. Collaboration between artists may be due to a shared interest in the subject matter, the methods of working, or the size and complexity of the artwork produced. (Earnshaw, 2017, p. 10)

Innovations of the 21st century present "the existential crisis of identity facing artists today … labor, falling willingly or not outside of the mainstream, marketed elite of the art world" (Bacharach et al., 2016, p. 7). Bacharach et al. also noted that collective art practices are becoming more common to help artists survive outside of the mainstream, network, and enhance their practice. If we look further into collaborative artmaking, however, Kester (2011) noted:

> There are really two decisive shifts at work. First, there is growing interest in collaborative or collective approaches in contemporary art. And second, as I've already noted, there is a movement toward participatory, process-based experience and away from a 'textual' mode of production in which the artist fashions an object or event that is subsequently presented to the viewer. (p. 8)

Apparently, "artistic collaboration has been a vital component of avant-garde development" (Green, 2001, p. xv). "Taken in the aggregate, collaborative practices suggest a paradigm shift in contemporary art production" (Kester, 2001, p. 10). Green (2001) also explained how

> a study of artistic collaborations is a telescope onto a larger study: that of a shift to a new understanding of artistic identity that emerged from modernist notions of artistic work—both radical and conservative—and progressed toward alternative and quite extreme authorial models, a long way from the simple paradigm of the single lone artistic originator and creator. (p. xi)

Bacharach et al. (2016) shared how collaboration in art has become both a way of life and an essential artistic approach. Green (2001) suggested, "Looking closely at works by artistic collaborations, I discovered that artists found collaborations and other, modified types of authorship necessary to answer pressing questions facing contemporary art" (p. xi).

Kester (2011) explained, “As the history of modernism has repeatedly demonstrated, the greatest potential for transforming and reenergizing artistic practice is often realized precisely at those points where its established identity is most seriously at risk” (p. 7). Kester also noted how collaborative art practices do not supersede a textual approach. Collaborative practices offer artists a different delivery of a key convention in the history of modern art, “the ability of aesthetic experience to transform our perceptions of difference and to open space for forms of knowledge that challenge cognitive, social, or political conventions” (p. 11). Moreover, collaborative practices are becoming more apparent as creative partnerships are featured in media and literature (John-Steiner, 2000).

Purpose of Collaborative Art

To understand more about how collaborative art practices are discussed in the literature and to identify the purpose of this “expanded field” (Green, 2004, p. xv) of art making, I drew many insights from John-Steiner’s (2000) book *Creative Collaboration*. John-Steiner argued that “artistic interdependence is a critical generator of creativity” (p. 94) based on “a temporary fusion of individual personalities” (p. 83). Based on that fusion, artists feel more comfortable taking and sharing risks while working toward a single vision. For the collaboration to be creative and productive, John-Steiner wrote, artists must also have complementary training, and skills as well as a “fascination with one’s partner’s contributions are also essential” (p. 64).

Other theorists (Lévi-Strauss, 1973, as cited in Wright, 2004) suggested that the progressive history of art emerged from the history of “people ... work[ing] together” (p. 533). Green (2001) specifically proposed that collaboration was necessary for the transition from modern to postmodern art by presenting a series of post-conceptualism-movement artistic collaborations that were “highly significant practices within both modernism and

postmodernism, because the practice of subjugating the individual signature is a paradigmatic interrogation of artistic production" (p. xv).

Artists, of course, see a different purpose to using collaborative art practices over singular work. Wright (2004) explained, "The situation is at least marginally different when, through the refusal of the commodified artwork and/or the means-ends rationality underlying it, artists prefer more open-ended process-based work" (p. 534). Wright (2004) was noting how, in collaborative practice, meaning is process-immanent and does not produce object-based work. Working outside of singular practice was also noted by John-Steiner (2000). She wrote about the art critic, Ernst Fischer, who wanted

> to refer to something that is more than the 'I,' something outside of himself and yet essential to himself. He long[ed] to absorb the surrounding world and make it his own; … to unite his limited I in art with a communal existence; to make his individuality social … Art [was] the indispensable means for this merging of the individual with the whole. (p. 72)

John-Steiner (2000) provided examples of collaboration throughout her book that emphasized the co-construction of knowledge. She also provided examples of art forms among individuals working together that were trained in similar or complementary fields. She explained, "The assistance they [artists] give each other is discipline based and intellectual. But there are many partnerships where interdependence requires also meeting each other's emotional needs" (p. 74). John-Steiner shared how "creative people often face loneliness, poverty, and recurring doubts about their abilities" (p. 74). Among artists, "care and conflict, fusion and separation, trust, individual artistic identity, and partners' negotiations about the ownership of ideas" were commonly shared throughout interviews (p. 76).

Problems Facing Collaborative Art

Kester (2011) noted that collaborative art typically occurs outside of traditional art venues, and this may be a problem. Although collaborative art has many benefits to those

involved, there are barriers and problems connected to practicing collaborative art. Barok (2009) explained how "the problem is that it doesn't readily translate into art critical judgment. Good collaboration doesn't necessarily mean good art" (p. 3). Another challenge to collaborative art presented by Barok (2013) is authorship. Barok stated a need "to rethink individual authorship so that it is no longer synonymous with capitalism but rather with what Guattari calls `resingularisation,' an individual or collective struggle against the banalisation and homogenization of institutional domains" (p. 4). Authorship and identity present a challenge to collaborative practices. Bacharach et al. (2016) explained, "The existential crisis of identity facing artists today ... labor, falling willingly or not outside of the mainstream, marketed elite of the art world" (p. 7). Wright (2004) also noted,

> What is more unusual, and far more interesting, is when artists do not do art. Or, at any rate, when they do not claim that whatever it is they are doing is, in fact, art—when they inject their artistic aptitudes and perceptual habitus into the general symbolic economy of the real. (p. 535)

In response to Lévi-Strauss (1973), Wright (2004) noted,

> Collaborative art practices emerge and flourish under specific art-historical circumstances. For one thing, as long as art is conceived as the production of object-based works, or as a process-based activity, intersubjectivity and interaction come into play primarily in the sphere of reception, and generally prove to be a stumbling block to art production. (p. 533)

Wright's (2004) work on collaborative practice offers researchers, such as myself, many ideas and concepts that present why collaborative art practices would face barriers, challenges, and problems, specifically in the context of "process-based" work (p. 533). Art is, in the first place, bounded by budgets and the allocation of resources and much of collaborative work is unpaid (p. 534). Based on these financial parameters, collaborative work "tends to be strategic rather than cooperative," a pragmatic means of resolving problems "specific to the coordination of social action" (p. 544). More pragmatically still, collaboration generally requires that both

artists understand the vocabulary, norms, practices, and expectations across different subject areas (Wright, 2004). Without this understanding, communication may be continually delayed or disrupted. In examination of these constraints, however, Bacharach et al. (2016) have argued that this interdisciplinary strategy has helped many artists expand their social networks while addressing contemporary social problems. Such strategic pragmatism, in other words, may have longer-term benefits.

The signature or authority that represents a creation is another challenge to collaborative art. Green (2001) explained how writers, artists, and sculptors use a signature to signify creative ownership. Green used Michael Wood's study, *The Magician's Doubts: Nabokov and the Risks of Fiction*, as an example of the role a signature plays in the arts. Green shared:

> Wood describes a writer's "signature" as the characteristic signs and tropes by which readers recognize the identity of writers. This signature, he argues, is the writer's visible subjectivity, but "style," on the other hand, is the more complex deployment of tropes, metaphors, structures, and devices within which signature is contained. (p. xvi)

Barok (2009) also shared thoughts concerning past problems of signatures and artwork. During the Renaissance period, bronzes were "signed by the individuals who cast the object at the foundry, rather than by the artist" (p. 4). Although the bronzer was needed to help with the creation, having only the signature of the bronzer would conceal the creative ownership of the artist. Barok noted:

> The critically-correct position today is to dismiss a singular model of authorship, which is understood to be complicit with privatised individualism and necessary for establishing market value. This is the story of a romantic conception of the singular artist as outsider, whose singularity gradually became determinate for establishing an object's worth. But this association between single authorship and capitalism is misleading, and can be challenged on a number of fronts. (p. 3)

Examples of Collaborative Art

As a means of contextualizing this study, this section comprises examples of artists who attempted to co-create themselves, or believed in collaboration in the art-making process and/or

art pedagogy writ large. The section begins with a brief literature overview of John-Steiner's (2000) and Charles Green's (2001) work on historical art duos and ends with a discussion of one additional art duo, Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat. In this second section, I specifically present samples of their work in the context of the discussion.

Collaborative Art in the Literature

In his 2001 text, *The Third Hand,* Charles Green examined the collaborative art practices of Gilbert and George's and Marina Abramovic and Ulay's collaborations;

> [Whose] actions ignored the viewer: Silence and unknowability, in combination with the complexities of double authorship, denied the expected economies of representation (specifically, the binary terms through which we habitually describe gender, pain, and experience). The works are complicated by this series of doublings, so much so that an understanding of the limits of identity as an index of the self becomes apparent. (p. xii)

Many artists duos collaborate based on similar artistic objectives of doubling. In her 2000 text, *Creative Collaboration,* for example, John-Steiner evaluated the working partnership of Picasso and Braque as based on her argument that "the juxtaposition and joint exploration of ideas are crucial for constructing a new paradigm in art" (p. 65). Picasso and Braque "were the creators of Cubism, a new, twentieth-century approach to painting that focused on the interrelation of objects. The transformation of understanding, and the use of new forms and materials, requires collaboration" (p. 64). Like Abramovic and Ulay, Picasso and Braque also experimented with series of doubling. John-Steiner (2000) wrote:

> With Picasso and Braque, the partnership provided new visual possibilities through each other's eyes, and through verbal and visual dialogues. Occasionally they achieved such complete fusion of styles that it was impossible to distinguish the work of one from the other. At one point in their collaboration, each signed his own name, not in front, but on the back of the canvas: in this way the painter's identity remained in the background. "We were inclined to efface our personalities in order to find originality," Braque wrote. And Picasso recollected: "So you see how closely we worked together. At that time our work was a kind of laboratory research from which every pretension or individual vanity was excluded. (p. 68)

John-Steiner, however, noted that the Braque and Picasso partnership was an integrative collaboration that transformed both the field of art and the participants. In an integrative collaboration,

> partners frequently suspend their differences in style. While creating a new vision, they can experience a profound sense of bonding. This pattern contrasts with the complementary mode of collaboration, in which differences in training, skill, and temperament support a joint outcome through division of labor. The complementary pattern is common in universities, research laboratories, and commercial workplaces. (p. 70)

Lastly, Green (2001) notes that there are many examples of

> short-term collaborations [that] preserve each individual's authorial signature style, even though the participating artists might all contribute to each area of a work; a good example is Andy Warhol's collaboration with Jean-Michel Basquiat. But such short-term collaborations that preserve authorial style rarely occupy much more than an incidental position within an artist's oeuvre. (p. xii)

In this phenomenological study, I specifically examine the relationship between Braque and Picasso in conjunction with the relationship between Warhol and Basquiat.

Co-creation in Context

In this section, I revisit the conceptual framework of Warhol's and Basquiat's collaboration in the context of both their artwork (Figure 1) and John-Steiner's (2001) writings on Picasso and Braque. In her work on collaborative art, John-Steiner writes of the Braque-Picasso "partnership" as one of "integrative collaboration" (p. 70). The author makes a distinction between "integrative and the *complementary* mode of collaboration, in which differences in training, skill, and temperament support a joint outcome through division of labor" (p. 70). In "integrative collaboration," however, "collaboration partners frequently suspend their differences in style," and in that process "can experience a profound sense of bonding" (p. 70). In this study, co-creation runs parallel to integrative collaboration, though I specifically define

co-creation by an indistinguishability of one artist from another and the potential for a double signature on a single canvas.

Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat

It is well documented that iconic artists Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat were close friends and mutual sources of creative inspiration (Hermann, 2019). I have noticed that art institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York often exhibit the work of these two artists in close proximity to one another, possibly to symbolize their friendship and reciprocated influence. What is less known about Warhol and Basquiat is that they produced over 140 co-created pieces of art (Raynor, 1985), where they worked on the same canvas at the same time. Some of these works are shown in exhibitions at the aforementioned museums, but they often seem to fade into the background where each artist's individual "masterpieces" are highlighted for display. However, journal entries from Warhol suggested that these co-created works were immensely important to them both (Hermann, 2019). Basquiat, in particular, was extremely excited to show the world what the two had been working on and thought that the products of their work together would be embraced by the art world (Sawyer, 2017). This, however, was not the case. In 1985, Warhol and Basquiat decided to put their co-created pieces on display at the Tony Shafrazi Gallery. The show was ultimately panned by critics (Raynor, 1985) and led to a falling out between the two artists (Hermann, 2019). Three years later, the two passed away—Warhol at 58 and Basquiat at 27. Since that time, these works have continued to struggle to gain importance in the art community (Hermann, 2019), and I find the reason for this unclear. Based on contemporary accounts, it could be argued that Basquiat was particularly hurt by the failure of the co-created works, because they were not only works of art, but also the byproduct of the relationship the

two artists had formed (Sawyer, 2017). It is undeniable that the two were able to gain enormous popularity by influencing each other's work, but their inability to co-create something the art community would accept was deeply troubling to both of them and ultimately led to the demise of their relationship (Hermann, 2019).

Figure 1. *Third Eye*

Note: From *"Third Eye,"* by Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat (1985). Warhol/Basquiat Collaboration.

Summary

It seems as though the critical art world's reception to, and dismissal of, the works created by Warhol and Basquiat at the time reflects a deeper norm related to co-created approaches. This tension between that which is deemed as important by the world of art and that which is rejected is an interesting phenomenon that also showed up in my pilot study, with the participating artists rejecting the notion that what they had participated in could, in fact, be deemed "art." However, I would argue that exploring what happens when artists co-create is *important* because important artists like Warhol and Basquiat find co-creation worthwhile, even

if we as a society cannot yet seem to understand it fully. Additionally, spending time studying the process of co-creation is worthwhile because it may be the case that, if previous co-creation attempts were considered a subjective failure, investigating the process further might lead to future co-creation attempts being more successful.

Choosing Phenomenology

Choosing to conduct a phenomenological dissertation study is an intentional pivot away from purely positivist methodologies in lieu of focusing inquiry on the *phenomenon* of co-creation, rather than on the subjects themselves. While there are several strands of phenomenology, I chose to follow the methodology offered by Moustakas (1994), as he presented a straightforward, practice-based phenomenological method for collecting, synthesizing, and summarizing the complex data that phenomenological studies require. Moustakas offered a concise scaffold for novice researchers to follow, which is helpful because, as Laverty (2003) suggested, some phenomenological methodologies "become more of a labyrinth than a cycle and the danger of getting lost in the 'obtuse' and 'incomprehensible' is a real one" (p. 15).

Phenomenology Defined

Creswell (2007) suggested that phenomenological study "attempts to describe the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon and what all participants have in common as they experience the phenomenon" (pp. 57-58). However neat and tidy Creswell makes complex matters seem, we should remember that Merleau-Ponty (1962) once famously quipped that phenomenology is necessarily difficult to define, because it remains faithful to its nature by never knowing where it is going. In an effort to draw a boundary around the ambiguous nature of the concept, Moustakas (1994) noted that *phenomenology*

originated from the Greek term *phaenesthai*: to flare up, or appear. *Phenomenon*, derived from the Greek term *phaino*, means "to bring to light, to place in brightness, to show itself in itself, the totality of what lies before us in the light of day" (Heidegger, 1977, pp. 74-75). Put simply, we can say that phenomenology is the process through which one explores the lived experience of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). According to Husserl (1931), any phenomenon represents a viable starting point from which to begin an inquiry. Phenomenology, as a process of inquiry:

> attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions, [in order to reach] a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an unfettered way, not threatened by the customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 39)

Another distinction of phenomenology is the emphasis on researchers using their intuition and imagination to obtain a picture of the dynamics that rest beneath the experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Historical Lineage of Phenomenology

For context, it is widely believed that phenomenology emerged in response to the "scientism" movement, which had swept across the philosophical community by the end of the 19th century. Determined to escape the ideas of empirical science, the purpose of phenomenology was to reestablish the values of Greek philosophy, whose primary concern was the search for wisdom. As a conceptual framework, early phenomenology relied primarily upon Immanuel Kant's transcendental philosophy, but also on that of René Descartes and his argument that knowledge is derived from self-evidence. In transcendental philosophy, all objects of knowledge are thought to emanate from experience, and all knowledge of objects is thought to reside in the subjective sources of the *self*. Moustakas (1994), who references Kant, articulated three such sources: sense (phenomena empirically given in perception), imagination (necessary to arrive at a synthesis of knowledge), and apperception (consciousness of the identity of things)

(p. 43). In addition, Moustakas suggested that Kant's transcendental convictions regarding intuition, and *a priori* sources of knowledge and judgment, markedly contributed to the development of a *human*, rather than a *natural* science. Kant's contributions made explicit that anything that is *within* us as knowledge or mental phenomena, such as perception, memory, judgment, and, in general, mental presentations, actually exists and is unquestionable. This is in contrast to natural phenomena, such as rain, colors, or odor. What appears in consciousness, Kant argued, is the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Although not a phenomenologist, the German philosopher Wilhelm Hegel organized phenomenology into a science while in search of absolute knowledge during the early 1800s. His intent was to be able to describe how someone perceives, senses, and knows about one's immediate awareness and experience. About a century after Hegel's renderings of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, also a German philosopher, proposed a carefully developed conceptual model of transcendental science that offered the possibility of recognizing the world not as a construct, but as a *phenomenon.* Widely regarded as the "father" of phenomenology, Husserl sought to subvert scientism, or, more precisely, *naturalism*. He viewed naturalism, the study of physical phenomena, as "failing to take into account the experiencing person and the connections between human consciousness and the objects that exist in the material world" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 43). Additionally, he argued that we should not study something like rain in the same way in which we study experience, because he believed consciousness belonged to phenomenology. Thus, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology sought to bring the person back into focus as the *primary* source for explicating experience and deriving knowledge.

Finally, Husserl's "transcendental phenomenology" provides a systematic and disciplined methodology for the derivation of knowledge, by emphasizing subjectivity and the discovery of the *essence* of experience. Moustakas (1994) suggested that Husserl's approach:

> is called *phenomenology* because it utilizes *only* the data available to consciousness, or the *appearance* of objects. It is considered *transcendental* because it adheres to what can be discovered through reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlates. It is a *science* because it affords knowledge that has effectively disposed of all the elements that could render its grasp 'contingent.' It is logical in its assertion that the only thing we know for certain is that which appears before us in consciousness. (p. 44)

Thus, according to Creswell (2007), in phenomenology, reality is not divided into subjects and objects, but into the dual Cartesian nature of both subjects and objects as they appear in consciousness. This results in the assumption in transcendental phenomenology that an object, or *essence*, is only perceived within the meaning of an individual's experience.

Moustakas's Phenomenology

As mentioned above, this study initially adopted phenomenology, as set out by Moustakas (1994). Moustakas drew almost entirely from Husserl in his framework, but it should be noted that Moustakas also wove elements of Heuristics into his writing. While Husserlian transcendental phenomenology focuses solely on the object, or essence, of an experience, heuristic phenomenology suggests that researchers also seek to understand *themselves* as part of the intersubjective experience. However, both disciplines require an understanding of the process of discovery through naiveté, with the ultimate goal of deepening the understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Similarly to Albers's pedagogy, emphasizing *search* rather than *research*, Moustakas described that research utilizing phenomenology aims to arrive at the phenomenon of interest agnostically, without preconceptions. He instead asks the novice researcher to utilize imagination and wonder.

Phenomenology and Postmodernism

While a handful of Merleau-Ponty's *École Normale Supérieure* students may have begun their academic careers in phenomenology, many of these theorists went on to produce work ultimately characterized as postmodern (Gordon, 2007). The language of postmodernism originated in Jean-François Lyotard's (1979) *La Condition Postmoderne*, and, though theorists have struggled to define the movement, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka have written that it "highlights the importance of difference, otherness, local knowledge, and fragmentation" and that it "tends towards dissolution of symbolic hierarchies with their fixed judgments of taste and value and prefers a blurring of the distinction between high and popular culture" (p. 4). In art criticism, Van Den Abbeele (2006) wrote that postmodernism has "an eclecticism as shocking as its formulations remain unpredictable" (p. 90) and this "dissolution of symbolic hierarchies" (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 4) and "eclecticism ... [and] unpredictabil[ity]" (Van Den Abbeele, 2006, p. 90) is, in many ways, antithetical to Husserl's (1973) language of essence as "a unity" or a "necessary general form" (p. 341). Based on this indeterminacy, this study departed from the language of essence or essentialism and instead utilized emergent themes as a way to understand how the participants described their experiences.

Summary

The dimensions of literature that were discussed over the course of this chapter were collaborative art and phenomenology. The objective was to orient the topic and draw a boundary around the phenomenon of interest: co-creation. The chapter presented information on collaborative art, demonstrating that, while rare, co-creation does occur, but that it is uncommon within the visual arts. The section on art and learning showed that, while individual learning through art is commonly theorized and written about, there is a lack of understanding about what

happens when individuals learn through creating visual art in partnered contexts. Finally, the intention and guiding principles for phenomenological research were presented. Chapter 3 will present the study methodology, with the some of the literature of this chapter providing reference points to scaffold the inquiry.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this study, I chose a phenomenological approach to research because I was interested in the lived experiences of co-creation. However, while the methodology of Moustakas (1994) called for the phenomenon of interest to be studied after it had been experienced, I was unable to find artists that had already experienced co-creation in the way that I proposed, using the example of Warhol and Basquiat in Chapter 2. Thus, I had to deviate from Moustakas in a number of important ways in order to move beyond the boundaries of reductionism or essentialism and adequately describe the lived experiences of the participants.

Initially, I designed a synthetic experience of in-person, single-canvas co-creation and recruited adult, professional artists to participate in the project. After the onset of COVID-19, however, I amended the study by having participants virtually pass pieces of art to one another. While I was unable to study artistic co-creation in person, then, the artists did consent to participate in the experiment, and based on that participation, the lived experience was organic in other ways that still spoke to the phenomenon of interest. After the artists completed their work, I gathered first-person accounts of the phenomenon through semi-structured interviews with each artist, separately, over the period of time that they were engaging in the phenomenon to collect descriptive accounts of lived experience as it occurred (Berg & Lune, 2012). Utilizing a related form of phenomenological thematic analysis, I then employed portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) to present descriptive findings of how the artists proceeded in order to surface emergent themes for synthesis and interpretation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) of the

experience of co-creation. After surfacing emergent themes, I conducted a descriptive synthesis in order to describe the complexity of the participants' experiences. While phenomenology ordinarily requires researchers to determine a singular statement of the essence of co-creation, this instead synthesized the more nuanced themes that stood to represent the totality of the lived experience. At the conclusion of the experiment, I invited the participants back into a member-checking conversation in which they evaluated the emergent themes as based on their own experiences and in which we spoke about how they defined co-creation and collaboration in the context of artmaking.

In phenomenology, the research is designed in such a way as to intentionally focus and intensely examine the experience being studied, "the 'nature' or 'whatness' of the phenomenon ... and how it exists in the lifeworld" (Wertz, 2011, as cited in Fry et al., 2017, p. 5). In a similar pursuit, the purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of co-creation through the surfacing of emergent themes.

My guiding research questions were as follows:

- RQ1: What do artists experience who voluntarily engage in an experimental, virtual process of co-creating art?
- RQ2: How, if at all, does co-creating art provide the opportunity for learning?
    - RQ2a: What are the components in co-creation that allow for learning to occur, if at all?
    - RQ2b: What is the quality of that learning?

To answer these research questions, I required information about the lived experiences of artists who created art with one another. Thus, I structured and facilitated an experimental, artistic co-creation experience, so that I could explore and report on the lived experiences of the

artists that participated. Based on the social distancing guidelines that emerged in the wake of COVID-19, I amended the study by having participants virtually share their artwork with one another.

The context for this study, then, constituted an experiment with artists who volunteered to participate. I did not study organically-occurring artistic co-creation; yet, the artists involved did engage in the experiment willingly. I assumed that, despite the artificial boundaries that were further stretched because of the pandemic, the lived experience I studied would be authentic and speak to the phenomenon of interest.

A more in-depth review of my study design will follow later in this chapter; however, I will briefly summarize it here first. In this study, I recruited six professional artists residing in Bermuda to participate in an experience of virtual, artistic co-creation. The first three artists that were successfully recruited each nominated one other artist to co-create with, subsequently forming three duos. To explore the perspectives of these partnered artists and their experiences of co-creation, they were asked to co-create a piece of art as they wished to do so. I did not provide guidelines or direction. The original, in-person design of this study predated the onset of COVID-19 and had to be amended to conform with the mandated health regulations in Bermuda at the time. In this amended design, participants created art products that were passed between artists virtually. To inquire about the artists' lived experience, each participant was interviewed multiple times: once at study entry, two or three times during the co-creation process, and once at the conclusion of the study. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. All of my interviews and interactions with the participants took place virtually over video conference or telephone, rather than face to face, due to the distancing restrictions in Bermuda related to the

COVID-19 pandemic. Interview data were then analyzed and synthesized using portraiture to capture the holistic nature of the duo experience following the conclusion of the co-creation.

Study Design and Rationale

This study explored the phenomenon of artistic co-creation by seeking to surface the emergent themes that shaped the nuances and complexities of the lived experience. Throughout my research process, I gathered information from three duos, comprised of six participants. I conducted 28 interviews from the initiation of the study to the conclusion. Leveraging what I learned from the pilot study described in Chapter 1, I used a phenomenological research design (Moustakas, 1994) that, when coupled with portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), seemed best suited to conducting my inquiry and exploring the phenomenon in question. I will explain these modifications, as well as the rationale, later in the chapter.

Moustakas (1994) suggested that phenomenological study should begin without prior contamination, such as a pilot study or a literature review. However, I decided to conduct both of these as an initial exploration to focus my methodological choices and establish a theoretical orientation for my topic. The methodological choices I made during research are outlined later in this chapter. I chose to conduct this research in a time-bound, experimental, virtual container, which created the scaffolding for the study, instead of observing artists co-creating in a natural setting, under their own volition, because I learned that few such co-creations exist in Bermuda. The artificially induced, time-bound experiment in which I invited duos of artists to participate was not fully organic. However, what happened inside the experiment during the duration of the study was spontaneous. Prior to recruiting participants for this study, I designed three interview protocols, which will be discussed in greater detail later in the data collection section of this chapter. I initially tested the three interview protocols on the participants of my pilot study: an

onboarding interview protocol, an exit interview protocol, and a protocol for multiple process interviews while the artists were co-creating. These three protocols can be found in Appendix C.

Duo Formation

The first element of my research design was the recruitment and formation of three duos. I will discuss the sample selection criteria and recruitment details later in this chapter. These professional artists created art with one another over the course of a maximum of five months, with minimal direction by me. The first three artists who were successfully recruited, and who had signed their consent forms, were asked to propose one other artist with whom to co-create in this study. These suggestions were noted, and I proceeded to approach each of the three nominees using a recruitment script. All three of the nominated artists agreed to participate and signed a consent form. Once duos were established, I arranged a mutually agreeable time with each participant to individually conduct an onboarding interview prior to the start of the co-creation.

Onboarding Interview

In this study, the primary mode of data collection involved virtual, semi-structured interviews, but it also included photos of the pieces of art co-created during the study. Semi-structured interviews (Berg & Lune, 2012) were appropriate in this case, because my aim was to explore and describe the themes that emerged in the experiences of the participants. The onboarding interviews took place over the telephone, as I could not do them in person. I asked each participant the same set of questions, and these conversations were recorded and transcribed. The intent of these onboarding interviews was to establish a baseline for how participants were thinking and feeling about artistic co-creation before they entered the study. Following the conclusion of the formal questions, I also reviewed with them the purpose of the

study, the research questions the study aimed to explore, and established ground rules for participation. This was also a time for the participants to ask me any questions they had before getting started. I also reminded each individual that I would be checking in with them at regular intervals to conduct individual process interviews.

Start of Co-Creation

The duos began the co-creation immediately following the conclusion of the onboarding interviews. Given that I had little control over how the duos would create their finished pieces, I suggested that participants document the progression of their discussions and of the co-created art products by taking photographs, voice memos, or recording their Zoom discussions. The participants sent me these files over email or WhatsApp so that I could stay abreast of their development.

Process Interviews

Following the start of the co-creation, I interviewed each artist individually on a regular basis using a previously constructed, semi-structured interview protocol, which can be found in Appendix C. Although the cadence of checking in varied by duo, I tried to schedule interviews on intervals of two to three weeks. Duo 1 had a total of four process interview sessions, while Duos 2 and 3 had a total of six interview sessions each. Therefore, in total, I conducted a total of 16 process interviews with the participants. This protocol was based on the Objective, Reflective, Interpretative, and Decision (ORID) interview framework set out by Hogan (2003), with the aim of gaining an understanding of how the co-creation was going for each duo. By asking the same questions on a recurring basis, I was able to get a sense of how their perception of the experience may have been changing over time.

Exit Interviews

As each duo concluded their co-creation in their own time, I relied on them to notify me that they were finished. Once I received notification that a duo had concluded their co-creation, I asked them to send me their finished artwork and conducted exit interviews with each participant. As with the other interviews, the exit interview was a one-on-one interview and utilized a previously constructed, semi-structured exit interview with the intention of better understanding the totality of the artist's experience during the co-creation. This was also a time for the artists to explain the significance of their co-created pieces of art to me, and for us to formally end their participation. While each duo began their co-creation near the beginning of April 2020, they finished their co-creation at different times. The exit interviews for Duo 1 occurred on July 29, 2020, the exit interviews for Duo 2 occurred between July 9-10, 2020, and the exit interviews for Duo 3 occurred between August 26-27, 2020.

Study Sample and Ethical Considerations

This study consisted of six professional artists who reside in Bermuda. Creswell (2007), citing Polkinghorne (1989), suggests that for a phenomenological study, there should be between 5 and 25 participants (p. 121). As this study had 6 participants, it fell within the lower boundary of the acceptable range to study artistic co-creation and to reveal themes that emerge in artistic co-creation. With regard to selection criteria, it should be noted again (as discussed in Chapter 1) that I conducted a thorough pilot study in the same jurisdiction where the dissertation study took place. Two of the artists who participated in the pilot study also participated in this dissertation study. However, following IRB approval, I formally contacted these two artists following the recruitment guidelines of this dissertation study, as required by the IRB, and they participated in different duos. Regarding the criteria for participation, each participant had to identify as a

professional artist and be over the age of 18. A sample of participants was sought that represented local demographics, as much as possible, of race, gender, age, and education.

Due to the size of the population in Bermuda, being a country of roughly 60,000 inhabitants, the study employed convenience sampling (Frey, 2018) from the small population of professional artists that reside on the island. According to Frey, convenience sampling is a form of nonprobability sampling that does not specifically seek representation. Although convenience sampling has methodological limitations, I attempted to mitigate these by describing the sample's demographics and other characteristics, comparing these data with those of the local population. In total, ten prospective artists were contacted for participation. Three artists volunteered to participate and offered suggestions for potential partners. The three recommended artists were contacted following the same recruitment guidelines and agreed to participate in the study. Four artists declined to participate in this study. Of the four that declined to participate, two declined due to a lack of interest in the practice of co-creation, and one declined due to their participation being contingent on working with one specific artist who, when contacted, declined due to a lack of time.

Artist Recruitment

In order to recruit six professional artists for the study, I interviewed each prospective artist using a recruitment script. This was also a time for me to explain the design and intent of the study, what co-creation is, and what participation would entail. In explaining the co-creation, I highlighted that, although this was a formal research study, I had no control over what participants created. I spoke with each participant about my intent to interview them over the course of the study, record these conversations through an electronic recording device, and transcribe these interviews. I also informed them of my intent to collect for records any images

of artifacts or materials that might be created during the co-creation experience. In this study, I collected 27 images of participant-created artifacts during this study, which can be found in Chapter 4 and in Appendices D and E. I made clear that any finished piece of art created by each duo belonged to them to do with as they deemed appropriate. During recruitment, I presented the artists with the informed consent form and discussed the logistics of participation, the design and intent of the study, the intent to use audio recordings, the virtual nature of the study, the way art would be shared between duos, and who would keep the art created by the participants after the study was over. I also answered any additional questions they had. If there had been any questions I could not answer, I would have referred them to my committee; however, no unanswerable questions arose. Following the interview, I then provided a reflective time and space for the participants to sign the consent form if they wished to participate.

Methods for Assuring Protection of Human Subjects

To assure the protection of the human subjects that participated in the study, I followed the five categories suggested by Lipson (1994), namely: confidentiality, informed consent, deception or covert activities, benefits of research to participants over risks, and participant requests.

Confidentiality

In qualitative studies, maintaining the confidentiality of participants is imperative. Participants in this study shared sensitive information about their identity, their personal life history, and their views about the nation in which they reside. While the nature of the study was not intended to be threatening to the participants involved, the jurisdiction in which the study took place was small, and every effort was taken to ensure that participants' identities were kept strictly confidential with regard to any interview data collected during the study. Additionally,

the findings of the study were reported using pseudonyms in lieu of the artists' real names. In some cases, it was not possible for the participating artists to remain completely anonymous, as the art created during this study is included in this document and might be attributable. In an effort to ameliorate the potential for participants to alter their responses to interview questions in a socially desirable way during the study, I addressed these issues of confidentiality at the inception of the study. Finally, all data I collected were kept secure using password-protected, electronic drives.

Informed Consent

All participants of the study were required to sign an informed consent form, which appears in Appendix A. The consent form detailed the nature of the study, referencing what their participation involved.

Deception or Covert Activities

In the description of the study located within the consent form and oral recruitment script, I was forthright and open in an effort to answer any questions related to the purpose and intent of the study. The language that was used to verbally recruit participants can be found in Appendix B.

Description of Data Collection

In my proposal, I set out to follow the phenomenological questioning methods outlined by Moustakas (1994) as my primary data collection method. In such phenomenological studies, participants are typically asked a few broad, retrospective questions after they have already experienced the phenomenon of interest (Moustakas, 1994). This questioning technique has the intention of provoking rich, unstructured descriptions about the phenomenon of interest, being free from research bias and unrelated to specific research questions. In this dissertation, however,

I wanted to study artists' experience of co-creation while they were living it, so the primary method of data collection involved three semi-structured interview protocols that produced rich transcripts of written data to review using the qualitative methods described later in this chapter.

I piloted these interview protocols on the artists that participated in my pilot study. While I reviewed these interview transcripts as data for analysis, the interviews themselves were not observed for analysis. In addition, final images of the art that was created by participants of this study were also collected but were not used for the purposes of data analysis in this study. Instead, they served as a reference point for data reporting that spoke to or referenced these artifacts. While I had initially thought that collecting images of the development of the duos' art pieces over time would help me track the development of their co-creation, only Duo 1 sent me an image of their piece while it was in development. This image was taken after the duo had decided on their direction and was near completion.

While the study could have used a variety of data collection techniques, semi-structured interviews were appropriate in this case because my aim was to probe and explore the meaning participants attached to their lived experiences of artistic co-creation (Berg & Lune, 2012). These three interview protocols were crafted following Hogan's (2003) framework of: Objective facts relevant to the experience, Reflective subjective perceptions of the experience, Interpretive responses about what the experience means, and Decisional action based on the three previous stages of questions (ORID). This can be found in Appendix C. Questions related to objective facts relevant to the experience helped me understand what the participants deemed to be true about these kinds of experiences, or what most people would report during the different intervals of the study. Questions related to the participants' reflective and subjective experiences gathered

data about what they themselves considered to be happening during the experience. Questions related to the interpretation of the experience helped me understand what meaning the participants might have been making about their experience. Questions related to decisional action helped me understand how participants planned to act, or were already acting, differently as a result of their experience. The three protocols were also designed, and subsequently used, so that data were gathered at different points of time during the co-creation experience: prior to the start of the co-creation (onboarding interview), on a regular basis during the co-creation (process interview), and after the co-creation concluded (exit interview).

In summary, the interview questions in these three interview protocols helped me develop a rich and robust understanding of the lived experiences of the artists that co-created with one another during this study. It was from this rich and robust understanding of the participants' experiences that I was able to uncover the emergent themes of the phenomenon in Chapter 6. In addition, these interview protocols were crafted in an effort to collect participant data about the phenomenon more intentionally than what I believed to be possible through the purposely open and broad phenomenological questioning technique of Moustakas (1994).

Description of Data Analysis

I expected that data analysis in this study would follow the five core processes of Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological approach, including a) *Epoche*, b) Phenomenological Reduction, c) Imaginative Variation, d) Synthesis of Meaning, and e) Statement of the Emergent Themes of the Phenomenon. However, in his guidelines for phenomenological analysis, Richard Hycner (1999) suggested that "the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants" (p. 156). Since the phenomenon of interest in this study is located in the arts, with artist participants, I wanted to use a data analysis method that was

interested in the emergent themes of the participant experiences, while being suitable for analyzing art-based experiences. Once I began reviewing my data, I concluded that the artistic data analysis approach of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) was a more appropriate method for analyzing the artists' experiences of co-creation. For instance, three of the phenomenological data analysis steps of Moustakas (1994) (Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis of Meaning) attempt to identify, isolate, and formalize the phenomenon in question, independent of the whole experience. Comparatively, portraiture relies first on rich, narrative descriptions of the participant experiences known as portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Once portraits are crafted, the data of these portraits are analyzed in an effort to illuminate and synthesize the meanings, or emergent themes, that individuals attach to their experiences. As a subset and complementary method of qualitative research alongside phenomenology, portraiture allowed me to combine thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the participant experience while capturing and reporting the nuances of the artists' experience in this study. By using the data analysis methods of portraiture in place of Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis of Meaning, I maintained the phenomenological research attitude of the project in order to uncover the multiple and nuanced emergent themes of the phenomenon in question. In the meantime, I also chose to write memos and reflexive journal entries, for my own records, about my perceptions of the experience during calls with the individual artists, discussions with my committee, and my review of the interview data. In this study, I thus adapted my approach to analyzing and reporting the data following the guidance of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), while also maintaining the attitude of phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the first step in the data analysis process of this study was Bracketing, or *Epoche*. The notion of *Epoche* requires a researcher to employ a new way of looking at things, and is used interchangeably with bracketing, in which the focus on the phenomenon is held in prejudgment, or brackets. This is a process where the symbolic meanings of a phenomenon are stripped away, so that the experience of the phenomenon can be examined and analyzed. In this study, I bracketed my experiences through practices I discuss later in Research Bias and Limitations.

Another practice included reading over the transcripts from the participant interviews numerous times before I finalized the emergent themes, in order to document and bracket my perspectives during each reading, so that I could accurately convey what the participants described. Yet another practice included speaking with my committee on a number of occasions to compare how I was making sense of the participant experiences with their interpretation.

Portraiture—Portraits

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest that, in portraiture, data analysis is "a disciplined, empirical process—of description, interpretation, analysis, and synthesis—and an aesthetic process of narrative development" (p. 185). However, to describe the experience of the artists in this dissertation, I had to first craft portraits of each duo's experience of co-creating art. My first step in constructing these portraits was to transcribe the raw audio data collected from the interviews and assign aliases to the participants. I then organized the raw transcription data by participant, interview stage, and interview question. From here, I was able to weave together the organized data from the interviews to craft portraits that portray each duo's experience of co-creation. To assist the reader taking in, or gazing at, each portrayal, I organized each portrait

by three phases, representing the beginning, middle, and end of each duo's co-creation experience, as well as by significant topics (Moustakas, 1994) within those temporal phases.

Portraiture—Emergent Themes

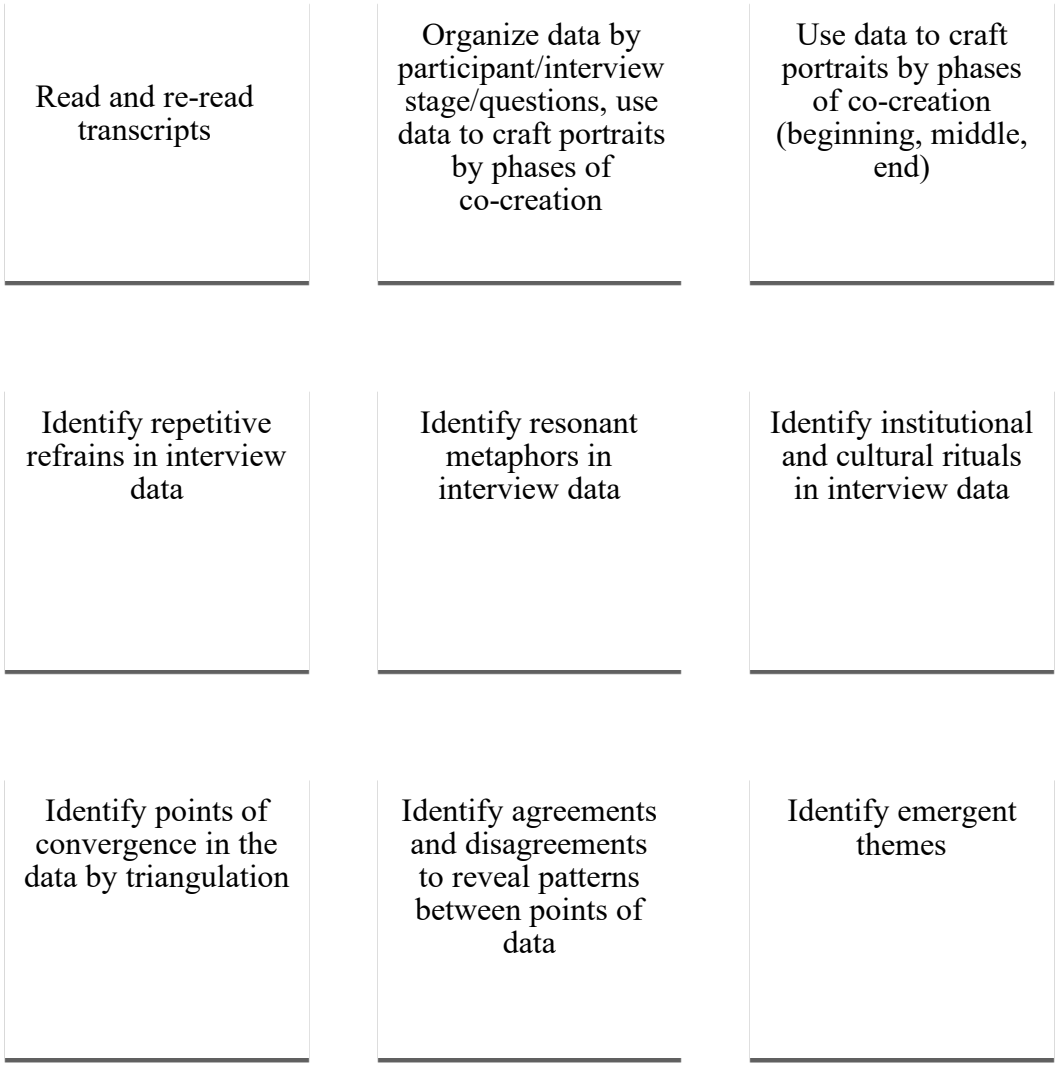
The next step of data analysis in portraiture involved the surfacing of emergent themes to identify relationships, meanings, views, and experiences through five *modes* distinct to portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis suggest that identifying emerging themes is an "iterative *and* generative process: [where] the themes emerge from the data and give the data shape and form" (p. 185). Though Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis do not define the term "theme," in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods,* Given (2008) suggests that in portraiture "themes give the data shape and form. They are consistently born from the data … emergent themes are constructed by first listening for repetitive refrains that are spoken frequently and persistently" (p. 646). Thus, this study defined the term "theme" as a topic or container noting the convergence of lived experiences told frequently and across the language in the portraits of the participants.

It is important to note that the five modes of analysis in portraiture are explicitly not *steps*, as one mode does not need to be completed before moving onto the next in order for themes and patterns to emerge. Rather, themes may emerge during any mode of the analysis process. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest that, once all the modes have been completed, the researcher can then consider all the information from all the modes holistically to search for patterns and themes.

In the first mode of analysis, I began to read the data and identify repetitive refrains that the participants used to reflect on their experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 193). In this mode, I read over the portraits of each duo multiple times, while highlighting instances of

repetition among the six participant experiences. After examining the portraits for repetition, I proceeded to the next mode of "identifying resonant metaphors," which are symbolic expressions that represented the experiences of the participants (p. 198). These metaphors stood out to me in the portraits as artists used symbolic metaphors to describe their perspectives and experiences. In the third mode of analysis, I identified themes expressed through the *rituals* of the experience, or the expected norms that reflected artist culture (p. 201). The fourth thematic analysis mode in portraiture is "triangulation" (p. 204), which involved using "different lenses'' (p. 204), including the artwork from the participants, for points of convergence in the data. The fifth mode involved *revealing patterns* among seemingly incoherent perspectives (p. 209). Unlike the fourth mode of triangulation, this mode of revealing patterns was not only about searching for agreement, but also disagreement in the participants' experiences. By highlighting these disagreements, I was able to find out what lay underneath these seemingly diverging experiences, in order to find convergence. Figure 2 presents a flowchart of the modes taken from data collection through emergent thematic analysis. Additionally, an overview of the emergent themes and participant quotes that I found to be illustrative of these themes is presented in Appendix D.

Figure 2. *Steps to Thematic Analysis*



Note: Author-created model representing steps of analysis using recommendations of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997).

Portraiture—Descriptive Synthesis of Emergent Themes

After the emergent themes were brought to the surface, I conducted a descriptive synthesis to create a whole representation of the experience, by weaving together the experiences of each duo so that the reader was able to glean a clear sense of the shared experience of co-

creation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). As the researcher, I trusted "that the truth of the experience [did] not reside in a single voice, but ... in the complex interplay of voices, the rich resonances of intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, and ethical currents" (p. 191). The descriptive synthesis served to bring the emergent themes of the experience of artistic co-creation to the surface in a synthesized way, representing similarities in experience.

Complexity of the Experiences

While this study utilized the portraiture process of data analysis and synthesis in support of the phenomenological attitude, I ultimately relied on the emergent themes to conceptualize the artists' experience. Rather than offer a singular statement of the essence of the experience as Moustakas (1994) suggests, I instead decided that the experiences were far too nuanced to reduce them to an interpretative statement that would stand to define the whole experience. In addition to establishing emergent themes, I sent all participants their relevant portrait, and one year after the portraits were completed, I sent them the emergent themes from Chapter 5 and the finished art from all the duos. After the first draft of the study was completed and discussed, I then invited the participants back into the inquiry, one year later, to review the emergent themes of their co-creations to see if they agreed with how I described their experiences. I first spoke with Anthony, Lily, and Nathaniel in a group of three per their own availability. I then spoke again with Lily individually. I also spoke with Dana, Chris, and Keyon individually over the phone. In each of these conversations, I asked the participants whether they thought they had collaborated or co-created during the study as well as how they were defining both of these terms. What they described, in both individual and group conversations, was a rich complexity of how all the themes interacted with one another and how to best portray the complexity of co-creation and other topics related to the inquiry.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, the goal is often to understand unique perspectives rather than documenting one objective truth, as espoused by positivist traditions (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2013). Ordinarily, phenomenological qualitative research asks the researcher to offer a singular, unified essence of the participant experiences. Amedeo Giorgi (1988), who developed the methodological framework for descriptive phenomenology, suggests that phenomenological validity has been achieved if the essential description of a phenomenon truly captures the intuited essence. It was not in the best interest of understanding the phenomenon in this case, however, to identify a unified essence. Instead, I determined that an investigation into the dynamics of the emergent themes within the interviews with the participants would more accurately capture the nuances of the diverse experiences. For process validity, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest that the researcher must remain committed to describing the emergent themes of the experience of co-creation as they were reported. In this study, the themes of the experience were described from the findings that emerged from the lived experience of the participants. The findings of this study were not intended to be wholly generalizable, but rather transferable and applicable to particular contexts and audiences (Moustakas, 1994), discussed in Chapter 6. This was because I was looking for emergent themes of the experience as it was directly reported by participants in the context of their co-creations.

Researcher Bias and Limitations

In phenomenological inquiry, it is inevitable that one's biases and life experiences influence, to some extent, the way that one analyzes and interprets the data. In this study, I was committed to practices that would keep me vigilant about my own biases as they emerged, and bracketed (Moustakas, 1994) them so that I could approach the data with a fresh perspective.

One practice included writing a reflexive journal during the study period to reflect on what I was hearing and to bring self-awareness to the assumptions and interpretations of the experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Over the course of the study, I filled four full journals with notes and drawings that I made during phone and video calls to help me make sense of what I was hearing. I also adhered post-it notes onto blank journal pages. Appendix H shows images of a written journal, post-it notes, and drawings, as well as one example from one day that illustrates what kind of biases emerged, and how I bracketed and documented them through reflexive journaling. Another practice included reading over the transcripts from the participant interviews numerous times before I finalized the emergent themes, to bracket my perspectives during each reading so that I could accurately convey what the participants described in my reflexive journal. Yet another practice included speaking with my committee on several occasions, as described previously. It is still possible, however, that biases I confronted in the process of observation—for example, the participants feeling preoccupied with time, with the feeling that I might be looking over their shoulders, or with my questions regarding explicit statements of what they learned—might have played a role in my analysis of the data, and thus my interpretation of these data also.

Another limitation of this study is that the artists who participated were part of a convenience sample. Of those that participated, three of them recommended who I recruited as the three other participants with whom they expressed interest in partnering. Thus, all participants were in some way mildly familiar with one another at the inception of the study. Had all the participants of this study been unknown to one another from the start, different themes may have emerged, leading to the possibility of different conclusions. However, the themes that

surfaced in my pilot study, where all participants were unknown to one another, overlapped with the themes of this dissertation study, although they were not identical.

Another limitation of this study was that, although I tried to remain in the observer-researcher role during the interviews, some of the responses I provided may have been perceived as guidance or facilitation. I aimed to resolve this by integrating a question into my interviews that sought to better understand the impact my presence was having on the participants, rather than ignoring my participation. In addition, the results of my presence are aggregated into the findings of this study.

All of the noted deviations, however, did not disturb my phenomenological attitude toward the phenomenon of interest or preclude me from uncovering the complexity of co-creation. The deviations or extensions were all in response to the living nature of the research as it unfolded between myself and the participants. These adjustments were made in an effort to most accurately reflect the lived experiences that inspired the initiation of this phenomenological study.

Chapter 4: Artistic Portraits

The purpose of this study was to describe the experience of co-creation as a living phenomenon. This chapter presents descriptions of the experiences of three duos through the use of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). As described in Chapter 3, the purpose of portraiture as a methodological approach in this study is to illuminate, in a rich and descriptive way, the lived experience of the artists that participated. Following the suggestions of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, the portraits in this chapter were crafted to capture and reflect the perspectives of the participants, as well as the complexity of the participant experience.

Participants

As discussed in Chapter 3, through convenience sampling, I identified six professional, adult artists residing in Bermuda. The study population included both male and female, and both Black and white adults. All participants are known artists in Bermuda, and all have had their artwork publicly displayed and sold in galleries and at art shows. For the presentation of data, each artist was assigned a pseudonym to maintain participant confidentiality.

Introduction to the Portraits

The use of portraiture in this study attempts to describe, as faithfully as possible, the lived experiences of artists that co-created in this study. Through a narrative description of the artists' experiences, I intended that the reader would gather a new perspective on the experiences of co-creation. The following sections present an introduction to each portrait, followed by a portrait of each duo. Although the duos could have been presented and organized in various ways, the duos are presented in a way that is representative of their *prior familiarity* with one

another regardless of gender or race. The order is arranged from duos with the most familiarity to duos with the least familiarity. In addition, each portrait is organized into a beginning, middle, and end to depict the process from start to finish for each duo. Although the portraits are presented in a linear form, quotes presented are not necessarily linear. At the end of each portrait, images of the art products created by each duo are presented.

Importantly, while my interview protocols were intentionally crafted to gather information about my research questions, I felt they were broad enough to capture any nuances of the co-creation experience that might have emerged outside my initial objectives. This was in an attempt to faithfully express the recognizable likeness of the artists' experiences, rather than a photographic representation of what actually happened, which, in any case, I did not directly observe. Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot (n.d.-a) likens this approach to that of a portrait painter, in that they seek to portray the subject as they view them subjectively, rather than depict the subject as they may objectively be. She said, "I am not an artist. My medium is not visual. My concern became then how I would translate the lines and shapes into written images and representations" (para. 9). Portraiture, as a qualitative method, compels the portraitist to create written portraits that reflect the likeness of the participant's experience.

Lastly, the qualitative nature of creating these written portraits has the intention of portraying the chaotic messiness of human responses, even in directed conversations, with an order that does not impose, but rather reflects the relatedness of these topics throughout the interviews. Listening for the parts of the conversation that are inclined to belong together, I have grouped the experiences of the duos in the portraits below by the topics the participants naturally brought up in conversation in order to guide the reader through what may seem to be non-linear and perhaps unclear discussions. This chapter guides the reader through the data, highlighting

points of importance, coloring salience, and contrasting relief. As a reader, rather than consider these groupings as delineations, prescribed limits, or preemptive pre-themes, I invite you instead to reframe your gaze and view these experiences as one would walk through an art gallery observing artifacts; entering at the beginning of a curated exhibition and leaving through the exit.

Duo 1: Nathaniel and Anthony

For the purposes of this study, I will refer to these participants by the pseudonyms Nathaniel and Anthony. Nathaniel and Anthony are both professional artists and art educators. As stated in Chapter 3, prior familiarity with one another was the method through which the duo was created; Nathaniel was recruited first and expressed a desire to participate with Anthony in this study. In terms of artistic medium, Nathaniel described himself as primarily a 3D artist, and Anthony identified as a 2D artist. Lastly, both artists had worked together on projects prior to the study, but had not previously co-created with one another.

Phase I: Onboarding Interviews

In my initial conversation with Nathaniel, I asked whether he had any previous experiences with co-creation. He said that he had participated in three collaborative projects, but never with Anthony, noting:

> Three definitely completed ones. And several times the work didn't get finished, or the show didn't happen. But I still think of them as useful and collaborative, maybe more as research than product producing.... Sometimes you're a technician, sometimes you're an advisor, but those things all bleed together. And, yeah, I'd say that even in my own work, usually, the projects are too big for me to complete by myself. So I'd need expertise, I'd need physical help. There's an element of creating [a] tribe in all the work that I do because I reach out to people and incorporate them in the making process.

To gain an understanding of Nathaniel's perspective on collaborative art making, I asked him to describe how he defined collaborating. He said:

> Yeah, for me, collaboration means that the sum is greater than the parts. So, whereas, if you're doing it individually, there's a pressure to produce a thing, to finish your job. With collaboration, because other people are involved, sometimes the physical finishing

> isn't where the project is going. Outside of a commission. If I was hired to do something with someone to do something, that's different.... Part of collaboration is the plan; is it all yours? I guess a lot of people, but me, especially, I like to have a plan about what I'm going to do. It makes me feel safe. I don't like to, "Oh, did I miss that meeting?" I don't like to miss meetings, change times, be late.

Toward the end of our first interview, Nathaniel described his philosophy regarding how collaboration was essential for him to experience different perspectives:

> It's good to get past your perspective of reality and try and collaborate with reality. It's impossible because you can't see outside your perspective. But I do think that truth, or reality, exists outside of my perception of it. And collaboration is the closest or most fulfilling thing I can think of to do that, which is why, even in my individual art practice, I think of myself as collaborating with the material, with the content, with the medium.

Noting his profession as an educator, Nathaniel described how he valued the experimental nature of artistic creation and was looking forward to practicing his craft in different ways in this co-creation. Nathaniel shared:

> I'm excited about it. Usually, the way I work is a lot of back-burner thinking. Stuff is going on in the back of my head. I'm working on little things here, little things there. So there's a constant sort of stewing of stuff going on, and then a deadline or an opportunity comes up. So, a show will be starting in April, and then I'll work to it. So, the finished works don't tend to happen until there's a deadline, or an opportunity, or a need for them to be completed. So, this is like that. This is one of those opportunities to produce something. And that is typical of my practice. It's constantly ongoing, but ... I don't really want to say, "but not necessarily productive," because it's productive in a different way. It's like if you're a boxer, there's lots of training and weightlifting and everything, but it's not a fight. So, you're doing that. That's what I mean when I say research. Art research is a collection of experience, and perspective, and perception, and interaction. And then the product is the sharing of those things you've learned.

My first conversation with Anthony also started with the onboarding interview. I began by asking the same questions concerning previous experiences with co-creation that I had with Nathaniel. Offering me a glimpse of his past, Anthony explained:

> This will be the first one where it's been initiated by someone outside of a collaborating peer, if that makes sense. Some have been enjoyable; some very successful, some didn't go through to fruition. One, in particular, had a deadline. I met my part of it, and the other person didn't, and the exhibition had to go on, and it was like half an exhibition. So I've had a few, and I've had varying results.

Wanting to know more about this particular experience, I asked Anthony to elaborate:

> It was frustrating. We had a year to plan it. I was really gung-ho and really optimistic and excited about it. We met monthly. I would give my updates and he would kind of give his, but I wouldn't see what he was doing, and I was getting more and more frustrated as we got closer and closer to the deadline.

As I generally experienced Anthony to provide shorter responses than his partner, I often probed him for more information or to elaborate on his responses. When I probed a bit further about his preferred working style, he said:

> For me, I don't want any experience to be a waste of time, so whatever the outcome, I think it's in the hands of that person who's participating. So, if I go into this thinking that it's going to be exciting, then it will be. I know that if I am determined to make it work, it will work. That's my psyche, how I operate.

In the onboarding interviews, Nathaniel and Anthony independently described that relationships are a big part of any collaboration. While I was curious about why this was in general, I also wanted to get a sense of *this* particular duo's relationship dynamics and what role the relationship would play as the co-creation experience unfolded. During our initial conversation, Anthony described a sense of openness and trust with Nathaniel. Because of the existing relationship dynamic, Anthony suggested that, as he entered into this experience, he didn't:

> anticipate any frustrations, and that might be because I've worked along with Nathaniel for years now, professionally, as co-educators we discuss our strategies, our experiences, not only [about] our students and planning for the year but even, to an extent, our work. So, I don't have a kind of fearful anticipation. In fact, I'm kind of excited about the possibilities of co-creating with him.

When speaking with Nathaniel, he described a similar, excited emotion to starting the co-creation to that of his partner, offering:

> I'm looking forward to it.... I expect to share my ideas with Anthony, and have them challenged, and produce something new from the contrast of our perspectives that wouldn't have existed if either one of us tried to make it ... the excitement comes from. well, I can be excited because I'm familiar with his motivations. I know what type of artist he is. I know what interests him. I know where he's coming from, and I know it's

different from my own. So, I know that that's going to be a fulfilling process. I know he's bringing a lot of good food to the potluck.

In this co-creation, the artists had to reach consensus about what would be created. While some might view the prospect of two artists choosing a singular direction as a hindrance, Anthony noted that the interplay of the concept generation stage, where the two would decide what to create, was something he looked forward to experiencing, noting:

> I'm sure that it's going to be an enjoyable experience of somehow finding that sweet spot in between. Not that you're compromising, but you're trying to take the best of both approaches or opinions or perspectives to create this new thing. That sounds exciting to me.

He then described how the duo would need to establish ground rules and a strategic plan before they got started. Likewise, Nathaniel expected that he could count on Anthony being honest and willing to take risks during the co-creation: "The familiarity dissipates the nervousness. I know I can count on him." Both described being excited to be working with one another.

Attached to this thread of this relationship that I am following through this segment of the portrait is the notion of how Anthony described his close relationship to Nathaniel as essential to pulling him out of his normal practice of creating art alone. Anthony explained:

> I guess the fact that I know the person I'm collaborating with. I can't get around the fact that I'll be making art and my work generally is not ... I tend to work alone as most visual artists do, so here's a chance to do something else as well. That was not meant to be a negative statement, but art should be a personal thing. It should be an outpouring of yourself, a spontaneous, perhaps, response. You have what you want to say, and so you create that. I know for myself, I enjoy those times alone where I'm creating. It's really at the end when I want to make the big reveal and then get feedback, and even in the case of getting feedback, the feedback is not to really get opinions of how this could have been done differently. So working alone, I think is a natural thing for most creative people.... While there are times, then, collaboration is necessary or a part of the concept I still think that most of the time you work alone and you enjoy it and you prefer it that way.

As a participant in my pilot study, I asked Nathaniel to compare his pilot-study experience of co-creation to what he expected the experience of co-creation to be like in this study. Although the pilot study was designed differently than this study, and artists did not select

their partners, artists *were* asked to share their work with others, which caused notable discomfort. Thinking back to his pilot experience, Nathanial commented:

> So, the key difference between the pilot experience and me being defensive in that and being open now is that I trust that Anthony will make something that's worth making, and I trust that he'll let me participate and be as fulfilled as much as I want to be. So it'll be like a true collaboration, and I have [a] belief that the output will be rewarding. Whereas the sort of the unknown element in the last one would have made me fearful and defensive.

The unknown element Nathaniel is referring to above is in relation to the study design of the pilot. I paired the artists in that study randomly, so that none of the artists who were co-creating had known one another previously. In this study, however, Nathaniel was able to choose a partner with whom he would co-create, which gave him a sense of comfort and safety. He noted:

> I'm really looking forward to that first conversation I have with Anthony about [the co-creation]. I would have been nervous if it wasn't him. But the way you've set it out, and the fact that I'm working with someone that I know what he's capable of, and I know that he's going to bring surprising things to it. I know it's going to be a rewarding experience, so I'm really just thrilled.

Phase II: Process Interviews

For this duo, I was able to interview each participant individually on two separate occasions during the process of their co-creation. In between these two process interviews, I tried to interview them for what would have been a third interview, but they did not feel as though they were in a position to share. During the two interviews where I did speak with them, I noticed that they did not describe intricate details of their shared art product, although I did actively ask and probe them. This duo was, however, generous with regard to the information they shared about what was emerging throughout the process and the dynamics that were unfolding between them.

Two weeks after the co-creation began, I contacted the artists for the first time to see how the experience was evolving. I learned that, one week into the co-creation, Anthony and

Nathaniel had one session via video conference, where, according to Anthony, they discussed "some possible themes, some expectations, some agreements, and even a couple of suggestions as to how to proceed."

In my first process interview with Nathaniel, he described what some of his initial conversations with Anthony had been like. As Anthony stated in the onboarding interview, one of the first things the duo decided to do in their co-creation process was to establish ground rules. Nathaniel recounted his excitement and subsequent frustration with the experience: "We came up with ground rules for ourselves. It was actually quite exciting, and that night and the next day, I was very gung-ho about it, and lots of ideas were bubbling, and then I got too busy."

Following this thread of getting too busy to spend *time* on the co-creation, the artists described time as a protagonist and an antagonist in their process. For instance, Anthony noted how he wished he could put other projects aside to devote more time to the co-creation. He described how "I think I would have been a little further along in my, I guess, strategic thinking" with more time. In my second process interview with Anthony, time was a growing factor, and he was more definitive in describing how he was managing how fast or slow he should be working in this co-creative context. As a side note, there was no duration of time that the duos *must* spend working with one another that was specified or required as part of the study design. Curious to know more about his stated tension, I asked Anthony how he was making sense of the longer duration of this co-creation:

> It's not been a bad thing because I've always found that even with my personal work, I will do so much, and then I will put it away, sometimes for days or weeks, and then get back to it. I feel that I come to it with a fresh approach, see things that I didn't really pick up on before. The lengthening of this process has not been a bad thing. It's actually helped. It seems initially like a bad thing, but in retrospect, it's a good part of the process. Then everything has been weighed, contemplated just a little more, and your thoughts are just a little further along when you do it again or start work again.

Another construct this duo wrestled with was being restricted to virtual communication channels to collaborate. Nathaniel and Anthony described how the virtual nature of the study was having an effect on how they communicated with one another. Anthony shared how "having to do the conversations, say by WhatsApp, we run the risk of misinterpretation, not getting ... that may be the challenge there." In the later stages of the co-creation, the virtual restrictions were less of an issue for the duo and instead developed in a desire to be in person. Anthony described that not being "face to face, sitting across from each other at a desk or in the classroom" was changing the way he experienced his partner. However, his narrative around how the use of technology shifted from one of limitation to that of an enabler, as his experience in the co-creation, was prompting him also to consider the possibility of virtual collaborations beyond Bermuda's geographic boundary.

As the experience progressed, the duo began to describe elements of the co-creation that were perceived as limitations at the start as adding benefit to their life outside of the study. Commenting on the structure of the study, Nathaniel noted:

> As an art teacher, other people's art operated outside of the realm of doing for me. So, I would've liked more time to work on my own work. So, I guess; actually, the real answer would be, [this co-creation] offered me structure because doing this project and helping other people with their projects gave me a reason to go to bed because I have to be ready for the next day.

There was, however, one structural element of the experience that Nathaniel expressed discomfort with from the start. As I was the individual that organized the co-creation and documented the experience for this study, my presence was obvious. According to Nathaniel, my presence was having an effect on this experience. For instance, in describing how the process was unfolding with his partner, he tried to make sense of what my presence was doing:

> I'm not enjoying working online. Even though our idea of ... We haven't put anything in the group chats since we decided to put things into group chat, and that's largely just because of work stress problems, but there's a weird emotional little bit that's

like ... I want to be talking to Anthony about it, so having a third party watching me talk to Anthony about it is odd. I'm just going to have to get over it.

Collaboration was something about which this duo spoke at length during the onboarding interview. In the process interviews, both Anthony and Nathaniel described collaborating in more nuanced ways that reflected the context of their experience. In some cases, they were changing the way they described collaboration as discovered through their short time together. Whereas the descriptions of collaboration in the first conversation tended to be matter-of-fact, these conversations were more meta, with reflective and emotional tones. Reflecting on his experience, Anthony explained parts of the study that stood out to him:

> I've enjoyed the discussions. I like how the discussions provoke, and I like the fact that the two of us, Nathaniel and myself, are both concept-based artists, and the ... we're planners, and so we enjoy the process of exploring and developing ideas, and then finding the imagery and the applications to make it happen. The materials used, and sizes, and all the other considerations are based on the thinking and the concept all in the head. I've enjoyed that part of the process, and that's been a highlight for me.

Similarly, Anthony shared, when reflecting on how the co-creation with Nathaniel was progressing:

> The experience of co-creation? Well, as an artist, often you would consider your work as a voice. And, you want to say what you want to say in that way or using materials. The co-creation involves more than one person. So, I think the end result actually becomes more of an informed work because in this sharing process; in this co-creation, two brains are better than one. And there may be considerations that you may have never gotten to learn. So, the opportunity or the chance to bring two minds together to work on a particular project, that's the co-creation. And, enjoying that process and being honest with it as, not with necessarily preconceived ideas, but to net, the end result, be an honest result based on what the two minds have come together to create.

Anthony also described the experience of his "unconscious connective continuity" with Nathaniel as a key part of artistic collaboration. Not really understanding what he meant by this, I asked him to elaborate on this idea, and he explained:

> While I may work alone, I still talk to others, including Nathaniel, about what I'm doing. And even though he may not see it, or he may just see sketches, there is an amount of feedback I'm getting through the process. And so, even though I'm working alone, or

> seemingly working alone, there's still that communication or that connection with others. And so, working together in a collaboration that hasn't changed. So, there's still the two artists communicating.

Describing his experience so far, Nathaniel described how the experience was eliciting feelings of validation, change, and liberation:

> So, it is easier to, or it can be easier, to put your ego aside because you have another person there to help you validate because, in order to make art, you only need two things. You need to validate your perspective, and you need to be empathetic to other people's perspectives. So, you have to think that what you have to say is worth saying, and you have to figure out how to say it so that other people could hear it.

Moving onto aspects of change, Nathaniel described:

> My thinking about working with other artists is that working with other artists changes how you think about making art. The whole point of doing collaboration is to change, to get out of your mechanisms, to change your perspective, and change what you were doing. So, change itself is the goal.

Moving onto aspects of liberation with the use of symbolism, Nathaniel suggested that collaborating:

> can be a very liberating and freeing experience because the responsibility is shared, and the opportunity to come up with something new is sort of doubled or quadrupled because basically you have more information to work with, and I can say something, and the other person can respond to it in a different way and let me see it in a way that I wasn't even looking at it before. So, there's a lot of really rich potential in that. That's possible for an artist.… In fact, that's why people think artists are weird, is because they're seeing something slightly different or another application or in a different light or the fact that it's beautiful. They're willing to see something in an unexpected way, or in a different way or a new way or novel way or whatever.

Relationships were also something that this duo spoke about at length during the onboarding interview. In the process interviews, both Anthony and Nathaniel described how the experience brought them closer in different ways. Anthony described how the experience:

> forced me to, I guess, look at Nathaniel a little closer. I am more impressed with his.... I think it was more impressive the way he really put the.... The experience has just further emphasized for me of his genuine love for what he does. And I hope that he sees that as well with me.

In conversations with Anthony, he described how feelings toward one's partner might influence the depictions portrayed in one's artwork. I found this idea interesting and asked him to elaborate on this thought. He shared:

> In this particular collaboration, we're two individuals who know each other. It's not as if I'm meeting this person for the first time, so that's helpful. Also, in the case of a portrait, while the portrait should have a physical likeness, it's largely influenced by one's feelings toward the other. So, if you perceive the other individual as kind of standoffish, aloof, friendly, whatever, those attributes would influence the way you approach your creating this likeness or this portrait, so that's there.

Similarly, in conversations with Nathaniel, he described how, although he shared a bond with Anthony from the outset, he was finding that the ways the bond showed up in the co-creation were inspirational. He said:

> Not only do we sort of know where each other's coming from and have practiced communicating so we respect each other and we're open to communication, but also it's inspirational.

Similarly, in the second process I asked him what the best part of the experience had been for him thus far. Nathaniel noted:

> So far, it's the sense of camaraderie. It's good to know that someone else believes in something and takes something as seriously and wants to do something as much as I do. I think we've talked before about how the human perspective is isolating, so it's the opposite of that. It's like, "Oh, right, this dude gets it, we're on the same page." We're working towards something together instead of getting in each other's way. So that's all very enriching.

During the process interviews, I wondered if the duos would be able to describe their learning either as it was happening, or relatively shortly after it happened. As it turned out, they were able to describe how some of their perspectives were shifting and what they were learning during the process interviews. For Nathaniel, his learning involved understanding differently, and how he understood his practice differently. With regard to his artistic practice, he shared:

> Yeah, it was a really cool learning something about composition and that's really great at my age and position to realize I'm open to learning because I preach that shit, but

> to actually do it is pretty fucking cool. Yeah, I found that I've.... What was the question? Yes, I learned some shit and I enjoyed it.

Regarding understanding differently, he shared, "There was something cool about understanding something you think you understand in a different light or a different way." In the last process interview, I asked Nathaniel to describe the experience of learning during the co-creation, and he instead offered me a description about what learning *felt* like:

> The interesting thing about real learning is that it feels more like remembering when it happens. I think that's when it actually clicks, like your brain accepts it. Maybe you've been trying to learn it for a long time, but it reaffirms, or it clicks.

However, when I probed a bit further to develop a better understanding of how Nathaniel applied this definition to the co-creation at hand, he suggested:

> But, ah, I think any piece that's a collaboration is probably going to intrinsically be more open to change than a piece done by a single artist because if I'm doing a thing for myself, I'm making this idea that is mine, and yes, if you're good, you're aware of what's going on around you, and you're open to that. But there's also a matter of perseverance and even getting this thought out before you get on to the next on, there's a domineering-ness to the expression of your perspective, but since it's not uniquely my perspective since I have to be open to the other person collaborating and participating, that means the door is open, the door to being open is open.

For Anthony, while he described ways in which he was starting to see things differently, he was hesitant to say that he was learning at this point of the co-creation, stating, "If I'm learning anything, it's because Nathaniel and I have chosen to use basically each other as subjects, which I guess is making us to think more about what we think of the other." He did, however, describe earlier that his relationship with technology was changing as a result of this collaboration and that he saw new possibilities for collaboration outside of Bermuda because of this new skill.

As I mentioned earlier, the duo kept the details of the development of their art product closely held during the process interviews. However, Nathaniel did note that when the duo reached agreement on what they were going to produce, it was remembered and described as the

easiest part of the process so far. He stated, “The easiest part was the falling in love with it, coming up with the idea ... that was thrilling and exciting.” Curious to know more, I probed further, and he offered me a metaphor to describe the experience:

> It’s like one of those moments when something clicked. It’s kind of like, I don’t know, you’ve been surrounded by this flower that you’re growing in a greenhouse or something, and then you find out it cures COVID, but you’ve been living with it all that fucking time. You’ve been great, and you survived the whole thing. You’re like, “What’s wrong with everybody?” But then you figure it out. So here’s this like revealing of what you actually are already doing and participating and seeing it for what it really is, I guess, instead of taking it for granted.

Phase III: Exit Interviews

After the duo notified me that they were finished and sent me an image of what they had created, I scheduled their individual exit interviews. A few weeks later, I had my final conversation with Anthony and Nathaniel to wrap up the study and gather their final thoughts.

Speaking first with Anthony, when I asked him to reflect on his experience and what stood out to him, he described that his focus was primarily on the initial stages of the collaboration. He explained how he:

> really liked the concept-building stage. Going back on forth as to where we should focus, what we should do, and then how to go about doing it. I always put more emphasis, a lot of emphasis on that stage. And we did that, I think, for a lot of art. More of the work is on the planning and the ideas than in the actual creation. So, that became a highlight for me with this one.

To learn more about what he enjoyed about the concept-building stage, I probed and asked him to further describe what he enjoyed. He expressed how he enjoyed:

> putting everything in order. What’s of interest to you, what’s of interest to me, where amongst that do we find some commonality or something of shared interests that we could explore? Then one of the possibilities, image-wise, that can help make this a reality, that maybe even a third party or someone else can see and appreciate. Keeping in mind that art is really to satisfy the creator first. Yeah. That’d be massive, for that.

Speaking about his experience with the concept-building stage that Anthony described, Nathaniel also described how the co-creation study felt like a buildup. However, in this interview

he recalled more tension in the development of the final direction about what the duo would co-create. Although at the beginning, the experience was "wide open and full of potential," Nathaniel also recounted how the:

> beginning felt large, like it was a long beginning as we, I guess, resolved to participate or resolved what we were going to do or what participating meant or all that kind of thing. So, there was a big buildup or like a soft, like a steady, big buildup. So, I guess I would say that stands out in that it was because it was a comfortable way to begin. So, then there was an angst of, "Okay. Now that we're doing it, what are we going to do?" Then, there was the thrill of figuring that out or that coming to us, or really, I guess, realizing that two people could be on the same page.

Possibly alluding to the process that Nathaniel described above, Anthony reflected on how the duo had to overlap before they could move forward. He explained:

> I think we followed an honest process. We shared ideas of interest for each of us. There is how they overlapped or where they overlapped, and then focused on that. And developed that and then chose a way to bring that about. The end results may be different if we did it again, but that may be based on time and other circumstances.

Reflecting on the co-creation, both artists described how having someone else in the creative process was beneficial. I asked Anthony to reflect on the experience and share how the experience was making him feel:

> I know the process that you go through personally when you make your work. And sometimes just to know that somebody else is in that same boat, somebody else is going through the exact same thing. They may have the same concerns or the same challenges or dry moments, or even moments where everything's cooking. Just to know there's another person who's experiencing the same thing you are right now, in a way, is helpful.

Nathaniel also reported how sharing the co-creation was beneficial for him. When I asked Nathaniel to tell me about his overall experience, and what he would tell another artist that was contemplating collaborative artmaking, Nathaniel offered me a two-part answer. First, he expressed:

> It's a great chance to see how people see the way you see, which is, I mean, that's what arguing is, but I mean like you're collaborating with the audience eventually. Right? But you don't often get feedback from your audience, and if it is, it's not that its they have to say they like it anyway, so that's fine. So, it's cool to have a mirror or a sounding

> board to point out what you're doing and see if you're saying what you're saying, see if people understand what you're saying, and then to see how that relates to their perspective and what they're doing.

Second, he reported that if he were to summarize the experience in one word to someone, this word would be:

> Rewarding, if it was just sort of one word, or enriching. Not rewarding as in "kudos," rewarding as in you grew something useful that the whole.... What is it? What's the adage? [It] is greater than the sum of its parts.

Both Anthony and Nathaniel suggested that they enjoyed the experience and, even with the benefit of hindsight, would not have changed anything about their time together. Reflecting on his time in the co-creation, Anthony indicated how this experience of co-creation "has encouraged me to even look for even more opportunities [to collaborate]." For Nathaniel, this co-creation experience brought him to a re-seeing. He said:

> So, it was really neat to learn something about something that I felt I already knew everything about ... like re-seeing. Yes, yes. A re-seeing what you've.... It's like finding Waldo because you've been looking at it all that time, and it's like, "Ah! There it is." Or connecting two dots that you didn't realize connected.

In asking Nathaniel to sum up his experience overall, he emphasized that this experience gave him "a deeper appreciation of collaboration and more of a willingness to do it."

COVID-19

Although this study took place during the initial phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not considered a major event for this duo in relation to this co-creation. Nathaniel noted an overall sense of "tension going on in the world right now." However, he was not deterred by the virtual component of the study. Considering the stay-at-home order and the requirements to work from home, Nathaniel noted:

> The social distancing and the inability to physically work on something together isn't a problem right now. It's actually a great platform because any work of art is an attempt at communication with someone who isn't there. So, it's sort of like the communication itself is the sort of current focus of our thinking, like how do I, as an island, communicate

> with another person as an island? So, there's a separation. Being literal is feeding into the project, is feeding into the concept and the conception.

Anthony had a slightly different view of how COVID-19 affected the duo. He noted a barrier in access to materials:

> Unfortunately, some of my materials are at school, and I can't get into the building.... I will be finding other ways of ... I have enough to start, but not enough to complete, so I'll be working on that.

Anthony also noted how leveraging technology, like WhatsApp, helped them overcome the barrier of proximity created by the restrictions of the pandemic.

Summary

Both artists stressed the importance of a working relationship that was built on trust, and that their familiarity during the co-creation helped curb the stress caused by uncertainties along the way. Nathaniel described how this co-creation helped him see differently, noting that his experience:

> gives me access to another person's perspective I wouldn't normally have. That gives me the opportunity to see from that perspective, which gets me out of mind, which makes me up part of the bigger whole and the bigger reality than I was before. Yeah, it's weird to call it new because I've been saying for a long time that there's a difference between knowing and knowing and it's weird.

Seeing differently was also emphasized by Anthony, as he noted metaphorically:

> I do want to know, I do want to see what you created, and I do want to know where you were coming from. And you tell me early on that out of the images that I sent, that he liked that one because I tend to smile a lot. So that one with the smile and he saw something there that he wanted to emphasize or to go with. And so, it's really interesting to see somebody else's take. I'm not going to say it if I like it or don't like it. I see it as me, and I see it as me through somebody else's eyes.

Both Nathaniel and Anthony described how this experience broadened their appreciation for co-creation and left them feeling motivated to do more of it, possibly even with each other. As Anthony noted:

> Now, so this was a collaboration between Nathaniel and myself. And even though I said I knew we would eventually do one, I don't think this is the last one. I think we will do more. And I'm looking forward to that as well.

Final Product

For Duo 1, the completion of the co-creation resulted in two artifacts, each being a portrait of the other artist (Figure 3). Nathaniel painted a portrait of Anthony, and vice versa. As described by the duo, the intent of the project was to project an understanding of one another through the eyes of someone meeting them for the first time. From Nathaniel's perspective, he explained that the final piece reflects how understandings and experiences influence an artist's perspective. He noted:

> The idea was that we were meeting each other across a great distance and projecting our understanding of the other. So we were meeting our idea of the other person. There was a table in the foreground, which went to the other person sitting at the table. So the idea is that when you look at each individual piece, you replace the other one of us meeting us at the table. So you feel like you were able or you feel like you were seeing what I saw when I came to the table. The table was both meeting ground, sort of a shared space symbolically and emotionally, as well as bridge to bridge the space between the two people, between us.

Anthony noted a sense of satisfaction in the completion of the project:

> The end results may be different if we did it again, but that may be based on time and other circumstances. And the fact that this has been done already, the approach that we took. So, I'm happy with the process. I don't think we skipped out, or we took shortcuts in any part of it. So, I wouldn't change the process.

Figure 3. *Artifact 1, Created by Duo 1 (2020)*

Duo 2: Keyon and Chris

The two artists of Duo 2 had previously worked together in a professional setting, but never in a co-creation where both equally shared the outcome of the finished products. Keyon (pseudonym) is a self-described contemporary artist with visual art experience, and Chris (pseudonym) is a self-described graphic designer. With prior collaborative experience between the pair, both artists came into the study with a high degree of familiarity with one another. As Keyon was a participant in my pilot study, my initial conversations with him explained how this study would differ from the pilot, and I asked if he had any thoughts about who he thought he would like to partner with. He suggested that he would like to partner with Chris. Never having considered himself as a formal artist, Chris explained how he was flattered with the recommendation and agreed to partner with Keyon.

Phase I: Onboarding Interview

Both artists had prior experience working together, as mentioned earlier, as Keyon would often hire Chris to digitize his artwork. In our initial conversation, Keyon suggested that this

experience would be “business as usual.” He said, “I collaborate with artists all the time, so this doesn’t feel different. It just feels relatively normal in relation to the way that I work as an artist.” He went on to explain how collaboration always begins with conversations. Initial conversations, he suggested, had the tendency to focus on art mediums, interests, and key artistic influences. Keyon also noted how collaborative conversations turn into collaborative possibilities. He provided an example, sharing that “even if I’m not necessarily tangibly touching something, I’m still touching it because I’m injecting a great deal of intellectual property into the work itself.”

Sensing that collaboration is something that inspires Keyon, I asked him to elaborate on some of the comments he was sharing concerning the importance of collaboration, and how it makes him feel and think. Keyon said, “I just tend to think that if art is life, that collaboration is a part of the human experience anyway.” As humans, we have all experienced collaboration on some level, and Keyon pointed out that we just cannot do everything by ourselves. He said, “We get help throughout life. We help others throughout life, and I think the collaborative process in art is kind of like a reflection of that.” I asked Keyon if he felt this was an idea shared by all artists, or if this was a way of thinking that was unique to him. Keyon speculated, “I don’t think that all artists believe that way. That’s what I believe based on my lived experiences and my interactions with other artists.”

In my initial conversation with Chris, I asked him for his thoughts about this co-creation; he discussed how he has collaborated in the past, but noted that circumstances would be different for this experience based on the proximity restrictions in place for the COVID-19 pandemic. Chris was used to face-to-face collaboration with others in his line of work, and he stressed that “things get particularly obstructed when you’re not face to face or you don’t touch base, at least

primarily, to kind of go through or agree on a certain starting point." Given that collaboration generally involves finding agreements between multiple perspectives and points of view, I wanted to understand how the artists expected the co-creation process to unfold. Chris noted:

> I think both parties need to be open and understanding, and patient…. I don't think I have any qualms about that particularly. But just in my experience, mostly trying to work in other ways than face to face, it's been frustrating because of the lack of communication. But I don't necessarily have any qualms about this particularly.

Chris indicated that mutuality was going to be important for him during this experience, much more than was normally the case in his prior experiences with Keyon:

> Until we kind of discuss what we both mutually want to do, because I'm trying not to put forth or overbear and over influence. I kind of want this to be as balanced as possible. And I don't think it's been an equal 50/50 [in the past] and I think I'm probably just excited to try to do that. Usually, it's me trying to bring forth somebody else's vision or me doing about 80% of what somebody else is trying to get across.

I asked him to explain how he felt the balance of this co-creation would differ from previous experiences. Chris's previous experiences never had the label of "collaboration," and he shared with me that the design of this co-creation would support the basis for establishing an equal workload:

> There's guidelines and there's sort of boundaries about me not just hitting the ground running with somebody's idea. This is carefully making sure that we both have an interwoven contribution to what's happening here.

From the beginning, I noticed that Chris chose his words carefully by how he engaged in dialog with me. He noted, "I think I'm really good at listening and trying to receive as much information as I possibly can…. If I don't communicate properly, I think it will be efforts wasted."

Throughout our initial conversation, I wanted to understand any potential fears participants may face before beginning the study. When I asked Chris to share any fears he may have, he explained:

> I don't think there are any fears. I truly believe that a good product can be birthed from us individually, so it's hard for me to believe something couldn't happen with both of our hands in the kitchen.

Although Keyon knew Chris prior to this co-creation and had previously worked with him professionally, I was curious if Keyon had any fears about the study and the co-creation process. Keyon noted:

> To be honest, I guess if there was a fear, I think it would be if we got to some sort of impasse and I had to make a compromise that I'm not normally willing to make for the greater good of the duo. But apart from that, yeah, no, I don't really have fears in the creative process. It's just troubleshooting, you know?

I wanted to hear what he felt a compromise would be for this study, so I asked him to expand on what compromise meant to him. He provided me with an example of a past instance with Chris:

> I've been venturing off into thinking about doing collage. Or not thinking, I have like the biennial piece which is a digital collage that [Chris] helped me to manifest. And so, I think because it's so minimal in a sense and it doesn't really have to rely heavily on his skills as a graphic designer that it might not necessarily behoove him to go in that direction. So, we would have to find something different if we're collaborating.

Keyon expressed that he was not feeling any pressure for creating with Chris. He explained:

> Well, I don't really try to speculate on what he would feel, but I don't think it would be pressure on me, cause I think we're pretty comfortable. We have a good working relationship in relation to creating art.

Projecting on potential ideas for his partnership, Chris noted the different styles that existed between them. "Well, if I can project, I know that Keyon is mostly a painter, and I do a lot more digital work and sometimes sketching." He continued his thoughts by sharing:

> So I'm really interested in how this is going to work because usually, it's me going over digitally what somebody's done. I think both of our mediums can exist together. That would be really interesting.

Keyon's only concern was for his partner, Chris. He understood Chris's schedule was tight as a graphic designer and hoped this collaboration would not be too overwhelming for him.

Keyon and I talked about three areas concerning the study and the potential experiences that may or may not occur. I asked him to talk to me about influences for any hopes and expectations. Passionate about artists helping other artists, Keyon said:

> In relation to creative influences, I'm a fan of artists that tend to collaborate a great deal with others and are deliberate in their intent to do so. And also offer credit to those that they collaborate with. I think the bigger a visual artist becomes, the more proximity he has to others, and helping them to manifest what it is they're trying to create. And so, I tend to gravitate to those artists that acknowledge the fact that the creative process has many hands on deck.

Toward the end of my initial interview with Chris, he noted how he was excited to partner with an artist he was familiar with and has already worked with. His feelings might be different if he had partnered with someone he did not know. He explained that "there would definitely be a lot more concern and worry there because I at least know enough about Keyon as far as who he is to the core or just his ideals." We ended our initial conversation talking about finding agreements in our potential power differentials. Chris did not sound worried, saying:

> I don't think there would be any backlash or resistance. I have full faith in that. I think our ideas are both similar enough to coexist. And aesthetics as well. I think we'll get along just fine, honestly.

Overall, Chris shared a positive outlook on the co-creation project during the onboarding interview, saying, "I do think this will give birth to much more opportunity or collaboration." I asked him to elaborate on this, and he explained:

> I mean, specifically with Keyon, I think it'll probably inspire him as well. So, I do think this will be fruitful from that artistic relationship specifically. And will allow us to continue again, these sort of types of collaborations.

Sharing a similar positive outlook, I asked Keyon to explain how he developed this mindset. Keyon described an influence through sports participation. He clarified:

> I played football, I played a lot of different team sports when I was younger. My mama shuttling me to football games, basketball games, baseball games, cricket, did it all. But I think also I can't say it's an innate understanding. But I would like to think that, I understand that. I mean, my role as a teammate isn't necessarily to be a leader, but to be

> an advisor to a leader. I think that's where I sit really well. So, the optics for me are different. The way that I observe things will be a little bit different. Understanding that no one person makes great things happen and trying to keep people grounded in that understanding and even keep myself grounded in that understanding.

Projecting forward, I asked Keyon to share what direction he would predict his partnership with Chris would go. He focused on communicating issues concerning Bermuda's socioeconomic and sociopolitical nature, speculating a need for:

> finding that happy medium between getting people to understand what I'm trying to say, and making sure that I don't drive them away from the content because they don't feel like they're ready for it or they're scared of it. Yeah. And I think [Chris] has a different perspective. He likes challenging people a little bit more. He likes those metaphors, cause I mean his background is music.

Toward the end of our first conversation, I asked Keyon, "Do you think [these different perspectives] will influence the relationship between you two or how do you think that will come up with Chris?" He replied:

> We do have a similar perspective in relation to that cultural observation. So, I think we continually try and find ways that are comfortable for both of us but also not compromise any message and confronting the consciousness of people within this culturally conservative framework. I think we've done a pretty good job with that.

Wrapping up the conversation, I asked Keyon to share ideas about setting ground rules for the co-creation. He explained:

> We already have a rapport because we've collaborated quite a few times at this point in time now. I think we have a relatively good understanding of what we expect of ourselves in relation to the project and what we expect of each other.

Keyon expressed enjoyment in the brainstorming process and how he shared a connection to Chris and the artistic community. Chris noted difficulties in vectorizing someone else's ideas, and also that reliance on technology created a disconnection at times. Technology was an important component of this partnership. Keyon did not own a computer and was not very tech-savvy, and Chris, as a graphic designer, relied on technology for his professional work.

Phase II: Process Interview

I waited a couple of weeks after our initial conversation before contacting the duo again. Knowing that Keyon lacked the technological assets and capabilities that Chris had, I wanted to know how both were holding each other accountable. Keyon admitted that he quickly realized he needed to improve his means of communication, reporting that he did not have "adequate technology to do the distancing stuff because I don't even own a laptop." In my conversation with Chris, I asked him about how the duo was progressing with ideas, and he said they had "fleshed out [the] layout. We've actually fleshed out the whole concept, but right now we're in the preliminary stage of just trying to grab all the content." He continued to share his ideas with me, noting how he and Keyon were "going through definitions and how to apply them to Bermuda." However, he added:

> I think research has been a little difficult.... Patience and.... And I think trying to find the middle ground between what we both want. Trying to practice diplomacy as well as, "Hey, this is really important to me. So can we come to a stalemate?" Or, not a stalemate, but an agreement.

When describing a brainstorming session with his partner, Chris noted that discussions between the two generated new ideas and inspiration for the project. Chris still shared positive feelings toward working with his partner, saying, "I've grown a lot more comfortable in just executing my ideas myself, and I will do my best to get my point across." Thinking about a recent conversation with his partner:

> I think we're both passionate about examining themes of social justice and so forth, right? So, I mean, the journey thus far has been pretty easy going because, again, I think we both think similarly as far as trying to make art for a specific social purpose and also a specific site.

However, in my initial process interview with Keyon, he suggested that he wanted Chris to open up more so that the project truly reflected both of their personalities. When discussing how to encourage his partner, Keyon explained:

> I tend to maybe not directly say, "Oh, man, I need you to talk about this more openly," but it's more along the lines of encouraging and coaxing ideas because if he may be reluctant to say something.

During this phase, I also wanted to get a sense of what the artists were thinking and feeling from the overall process concerning thoughts on challenges and barriers. In discussions with Keyon, his passion for communal art was evident in how he explained working with others. Keyon explained how:

> being a part of the artistic communal experience is very fruitful for me, and why as I've progressed as an artist and my career, I've always tried to make the experience of creating art a communal one.

In the initial stages of the project, Keyon's only concern was the potential to make a compromise on an issue he was not comfortable with. However, in practice, collaboration presented some minor challenges; Chris explained that one "difficult thing has been trying to sift through both of our suggestions and filtering and picking the best ones." Keyon noted that his partner had a lot of work commitments, and Chris highlighted that a lack of proximity presented a change to the traditional sense of collaboration and noted he missed that aspect, saying, "I would certainly much rather meet face to face initially. I think that sets a different tone. I feel like when people don't meet face to face things that are more urgent will gloss over." Making note of the special circumstances that the pandemic presented, Chris explained:

> It would definitely be a lot more intimate if we were in the same space for sure. I think we would have a lot more momentum behind us if we had the face-to-face dialogue and so forth. I think it's a little more draining that the distance between us is a factor.

Similarly, as this project was a virtual co-creation, Keyon shared how quickly he realized that not having access to reliable technology presented a problem in communication. He noted:

> Distance does something that I have to take into consideration when creating ... staying dialed in is a whole lot more difficult ... because you're feeding off of each other's energy, it's tangible, it's real.

He also noted how this co-creation was helping him understand how access to technology was limiting for him, suggesting:

> Throughout this process, I'm realizing that that's one of my weaknesses in relation to collaborating over distance or creating it with someone in isolation where people are both isolated and don't have the ability to converge on one another.

Chris also noted that pacing and time management were influencing his experience, and that Keyon was working slower than what he was used to. When I asked Chris, "What does slowing down do for you, do you think, or not being able to speed up, inversely?" Chris responded by saying:

> I mean, a slower pace will ultimately make me think more about what I'm doing. And I'm not foreign to that, but I try my best not to really overthink. I think because getting caught up in that cycle of perfectionism, I mean, it's all too common for me. So, this is why I try to execute things as fast as I possibly can, so I don't get caught up in that cycle.

Chris, however, noted an appreciation for his partner, saying that through this process, "it's been really cool to be heard instead of just being a muse for other people." I was curious to understand more about how Chris felt about this new role he was holding as an artist. As a graphic designer, Chris was used to generating work for other artists based on their instructions and concepts. Chris reflected on feeling excited to have a role in the partnership that was different from his professional role, explaining, "Now there's a little bit less of that and more of how I get to kind of again contribute and discuss rather than try to bring forth somebody else's vision." Chris illustrated learning the importance of having "a plan on how both parties' aesthetics can exist together."

Two weeks later, I caught up with Chris and asked him to share any progress on his project with his partner. Chris noted that they were making great progress:

> So, we've come to the conclusion that we're going to try to use definitions and examples in our works just to make things look palatable and more digestible to people who aren't privy to or who won't do their own research and find out what these words

> mean because all sorts of meaningless discourse happens on social media. And I think some of our motivation is trying to bring awareness to those types of people who are swamped by their daily lives and not taking real time to figure out what some of these buzzwords mean.

Chris clarified that co-creation was not always easy; collaboration involves a give and take and coming to a consensus that both partners find satisfactory. He said, "I think the most difficult thing has been trying to sift through both of our suggestions and filtering and picking the best ones." However, when I asked him if anything about the process was difficult, he responded, "For me, nothing has been too difficult." Keyon also noted that he and his partner were "in the trenches all the time, talking about this piece that we were creating." I asked him what type of advice he would give to other artists that were halfway through a co-creation project:

> I think making the real effort to stay on top of things has proven to be challenging, especially because this is a pandemic and I would say, don't be afraid to be the captain because you can't always trust that things will fall into place. Always try to keep on top of yourself and your collaborators.

Time management was also reflected in the feedback from both artists, as both wanted to complete the project successfully; however, ideas on effective use of time varied between the artists. Keyon noted being accustomed to a fast pace, as Chris had mentioned earlier. I asked Keyon if he was concerned with the pace of the project, and he explained:

> I spend a great deal of time articulating concepts, little preliminary drawings, and stuff. But I also have this really good idea of what it looks like in my head, and then coming to [Chris] … those things is normally really easy, and it goes by really quick.

Scheduling was also an important component of time management for both artists. Keyon explained:

> We've had to make do with whatever time was allotted to us. Our schedules were drastically different, especially because of the fact that I tend to work nights and evenings. So, when I do have free time, it's normally twice out of the week. And maybe one day out of the week, I'll actually go to see him, and then we can actually work on something.

On the topic of timeline, I was curious to know what Keyon and Chris felt about having a deadline for the co-creation. Chris suggested, “I guess if anything, it just makes me aware that I don’t have an endless amount of time to play with, even though I think there’s a good bit of time for this project.”

During this phase of the process, I wanted to understand how Keyon and Chris differentiated creating alone versus creating with another artist, if at all, as many artists do. Keyon responded:

> I guess creating art individually, you’re constantly relying on your default influences and artistic ideals that are inherent to you, your creative morality as well. I think in relation to collaboration, you always have to find some sort of happy medium. In relation to me being an artist, I don’t have a great deal of fear in relation to maybe social repercussions of creating something that is genuinely socially engaging and could possibly dredge up feelings that people don’t want to feel. So, I normally have to make sure or get approval with that person that I’m creating with that if we go down this path, we’re going to be okay.

In conversation with Chris, he suggested that making art with a partner would naturally involve conflict. He noted, “I think two humans trying to coexist or co-create in general will, there will be some conflict. Whether it’s minimal or it’s huge.” I probed, to see if he would elaborate. Speaking about the components of communication, including challenges, Chris noted:

> All sorts of communication and fickle elements exist in the gray area when two people are trying to figure something out, and maybe words are not sufficient enough to get across ideas. There’s also the reconsideration of *is this good enough?* Or, there’s just the figurative chucking scrolls of paper in the bin or saving ideas for a later time and just choosing what we should kind of execute on. Yeah. These fickle things are, were a part of the process. Yeah. This is really well; the big difference is because you can always when you’re a creator, and you want to manifest your own vision, it’s much different from manifesting other people’s visions and co-creation in general.

I asked Keyon how he was feeling about the process, and he described how the importance of listening in a partnership was becoming more evident to him. I asked him to elaborate on this:

> Listening and observing are a very strong suit in relation to collaboration for me, and also just being very malleable and being, I guess, very peaceful in the sense of if there was an opportunity for conflict to arise based on our perspectives or maybe a misunderstanding through the written word or things that weren't communicated effectively by either one of us, I'm more inclined to use language to maintain peace as opposed to it escalating and getting frustrated.

At the end of this phase, Keyon noted how this experience was helping him learn about some of the dynamics inherent to collaborative work. It was clear that learning to navigate obstacles was important for Keyon when he described how, through this experience, he:

> genuinely changed and taking more accountability for being deliberate with my own actions. Communicating more. I think that was the thing that I learned a lot. Creating via distance, I believe now relies on ... will rely on more consistent communication, updates, check-ins, how you do things.

Probing further about his learning I asked Keyon to tell me more:

> I'm giving you a contemporary synopsis of what I've learned is that very normalized apparatuses may not necessarily work for us. Whether it's WiFi connections, internet connections ... that may not necessarily matter, depending on our geographical position. Depending on where we are in proximity to each other, based on just our lived experiences in Bermuda, if that makes any type of sense.

In thinking about describing the co-creation experience to strangers, I asked Chris, "How would you talk to them about your experience of making art with another artist so far?" Chris responded:

> In this particular experience, it's been a little distant, a bit long-winded, in my opinion. I like to execute on things when I'm passionate about them, because again, I just have my sights on, different disciplines. So, I like to, execute quickly and then just kind of move on to the next project. I think Keyon is a bit of a ruminator, but there are things that both of us can learn from that. Me, patience. Him, trying not to ruminate too long. Right. There's a, I think there's a middle ground there.

However, when Keyon described what he was taking away from the co-creation experience of making art with another artist, he said:

> Anything that I've ever felt, is necessary in relation to collaboration. The sharing of ideas. You share enough perspectives, ideals.... Like the overemphasis of artistic ideology and how that makes sense in our individual lives, and how we choose to manifest those things when we're creating together.

I felt that his final reflection from this conversation was poetic. Keyon shared what it was like to be an artist in Bermuda, where proximity is part of everyday life:

> Being open and conscious of what you're in proximity to, what you believe in, who you believe in, has a great deal of importance in relation to what I may define, or what an individual may define as the Bermudian experience.

Phase III: Exit Interview

At the conclusion of the study, I conducted exit interviews with each artist to get a sense of how they were thinking and feeling as they exited the study. It was my observation that, although the artists already knew one another before participating in this study, they were able to develop a closer connection, which seemed to spill into conversations beyond the study. Keyon shared, "I realized that intimacy and tangibility are important for me to create art." As suggested through their conversations, the project focus was culturally inspired, as Keyon and Chris researched many of the cultural and ideological aspects of race and colonialism to help during their collaboration and brainstorming. Keyon described his preference for research using books, while Chris shared how he was not used to researching using books as a primary resource. Chris noted that researching various aspects of their project online was difficult at times, noting:

> Just finding out new information and new books to reference has been cool. Especially in the context of Bermudian literature. I'm not the biggest reader, so that's always a humbling experience for me.

Chris also noted how he was inspired by trying to prioritize better: "I'm learning how to do that, instead of just taking on the first thing that runs or the first thing that's put on the table." The co-creation project provided him the chance to slow down and prioritize what was meaningful to him during co-creation.

In walking away from this experience, Chris noted that he "found out about the things [I'm] passionate about, always inquire about somebody else, too." Chris was explaining how one

can find inspiration in others, suggesting that you simply had to be willing to initiate the conversation. Supporting the idea of learning with a partner, Keyon shared:

> I guess in the beginning, I think one of the things that was really good was just diving back into the work of creative. I think that was profoundly beneficial for me, apart from the very healthy conversations I was having about art and life.

Chris also came to realize the true importance of physical presence, describing how often he had taken things for granted before the pandemic. For example, he suggested that proximity was a comfort many people needed in their lives for mental health and social wellbeing. Chris explained:

> I definitely know that face-to-face gives it a different type of motivation. I think it's easy to get lost in your day-to-day when the collaborator is not necessarily right there in front of you. Human interaction is everything, one of the most important things as far as connections and collaboration, and so forth. And I think specifically my collaborator also agrees with that, and we're seeing.... Well, life gets in the way as far as we've obviously got to deal with our peripheral before we do digital anything. So yeah, that's the challenge for me.

In the exit interviews, the artists also expressed thoughts about the need for reliable technology. Thinking about project roadblocks caused by technological issues, Chris noted:

> There definitely were roadblocks, just in numerous things that may have hampered in our progress. My screen just decided to go kaput, and it was actually a manufacturing issue, and I had to take it to get repaired.

For this partnership, the duo described how learning to overcome barriers in communication via technology and a lack of proximity was a learning experience. Chris learned how to "remain as steadfast as I possibly can to try to always keep a point of contact so that nobody loses momentum." Boundaries can be formed by materials or time, and Chris described that these were present throughout the co-creation experience. Chris shared how "I believe this was a bit just disconnected because of relying on the devices." Keyon learned the importance of having adequate and efficient technology to support a collaborative effort. He identified a learning moment, when he noted how he did not:

> necessarily [have] adequate technology to do the distancing stuff because I don't even own a laptop. You know what I mean? I still have to rectify that in order to progress and to be able to be a whole lot more efficient in the way that I do things as an artist when I can't necessarily have access to the artists that I'm collaborating with and creating with.

Keyon described learning in moments of "mutual understanding in regards to change, and creating work that we don't collectively understand, but try to understand." Keyon also noted that co-creation for the duo had become a "creative catharsis ... because you're feeding off of each other's energy, it's tangible, it's real." Reflecting on his experience, Keyon noted that collaboration was inspiring to him. He explained:

> I don't think anybody really creates art in isolation. Just in the sense of ideas and inspiration aren't solely concocted by yourself. You're always observing; you're always finding inspiration in things that you're in proximity to.

However, he noted that his view of collaboration was "subjective," and he did not think that "all artists believe that way. That's what I believe based on my lived experiences and my interactions with other artists." To Keyon, a successful partnership creates a connection.

In discussing what was easy and difficult about his partnership experience with Chris, Keyon explained that "the most easy part [was] conceptualizing, roughing out concepts, talking, conceptualizing it through, getting it to the point where it [had] to manifest." However, difficulties arose when it came time to manifest the concept. Keyon noted the importance of pushing through:

> Sometimes somebody doesn't have the energy for it today because they've had a hard day. You're not always in sync, or you're hardly ever in sync, but you have to find the time, etch out the time in your day to.... You have to make the time for it. And then, even when you've made time for it, maybe you don't have the energy for it today.

During this final conversation with Keyon, I asked him if the experience had any benefits. Keyon said, "I guess in the beginning, I think one of the things that was really good was just diving back into the work of creativity." He elaborated, "I definitely missed the collaborative creative process because I just genuinely enjoy it." Keyon explained how he was so focused on

finding inspiration from books and other resources that he had overlooked the inspirational benefits of working with others, noting, “I realized that intimacy and tangibility are important for me to create art.”

I also asked Chris what was easy and difficult about his partnership experience with Keyon. In reflecting on his time during the co-creation, Chris said, “The easiest part I say was the conceptualization.” Thinking about some tips he could share with other artists considering co-creation projects, Chris noted:

> I think in previous conversations, we would just talk about patience and trying to consider what would be equal footing, and the discussion of what can coexist as far as each person’s own style or aesthetic and ideals, trying to discuss. That is really the key to it all.

Regarding what was difficult for Chris, he said, “Who knows when the next time will be when I’ll [get the chance to] collaborate with somebody on an equal footing?”

Chris offered recommendations for future artists considering collaboration. To promote a successful experience, he suggested that artists find “the things you’re passionate about, always inquire about somebody else, too.” Keyon framed his recommendations as a desire to:

> arm people. I just genuinely want to arm people with the rhetoric of change, terminology that can help them see and observe the world that they live in, in a different light. Because I just think information is powerful and I think if we treat it like a virus it’ll move like a virus.

COVID-19

One artist experienced a loss during the project, and this did impact the process; he noted that grieving is a part of loss and can impact personal and professional relationships. His partner demonstrated patience and understanding, recognizing his need for time and space to grieve. When I contacted this individual, he was ready to talk, and he shared a longing for the things that motivated him:

> I think mortality can quite affect your creative output. Loss can affect your creative output, and whether you create or not, depending on how you harness it. I just didn't, for the most part. Last week and the first week of the two-week period, I was actually in a really good creative frame of mind. One of my friends got us into some Zoom chat, and then I realized how much I missed being around other creatives and how that actually affects my creative output and my desire to create. I just think there's something to be said about being around people that get it.

During the time of loss, the partner suggested that the experience was:

> a humbling lesson for me because these things can happen, and he was a fickle, and we can just shift priorities just like that, which is not right or wrong. And I'm not trying to vilify anybody. I just, it was a neutral sort of experience, like just trying to be compassionate and understand that the world doesn't stop as soon as we start collaborating on something or we have to work on something.

COVID-19 also offered other partnership dynamics; for example, Keyon described that co-creating proved challenging at times:

> Due to my isolation and I guess my current circumstances, I just haven't been fully, I think, fully dedicated to creation because I think there were just other things just consuming my time.

Although some may view the limitations of COVID-19 as negative, new opportunities and old methods of communication surfaced and were highlighted. Keyon noted that his old style of quickly conversing with others had changed:

> Personally, I had some really great, beautiful conversations with other artists. While I was social distancing and going through all these pandemic protocols, I had the opportunity to be still, and literally, some of my conversations lasted for two to three hours, just normally. They weren't labored, and they weren't constricted by time.

Keyon further explained how he learned:

> Navigating what proximity may mean to us in relation to our internet connection, our geographical positioning in Bermuda. It's really interesting. It presents difficulties that I would surmise, that would be Bermudian. But also, I think globally people are experiencing.

Summary

The experiences of the co-creation experience for Duo 2 evolved as the process went through various phases of initiation toward completion. In the beginning, both Keyon and Chris experienced a self-reported mutual excitement for the possibilities of the project.

Reaching the end of the co-creation, the duo reported experiencing shifts of emotion from the initial excitement to frustrations, sadness, and stress. These self-reported emotions then changed to resilience, compassion, patience, and satisfaction. Keyon and Chris would share with each other, and, in opening up to one another, they said that they formed a reciprocated connection of caring and concern. Considering lessons to learn from the co-creation project, Keyon shared learning the importance of listening in the process of creating. Keyon reported how Chris:

> was a listener, which is really good, and that's definitely something that I've been able to kind of learn from him in relation to creating. It doesn't feel like I'm dictating to somebody and they're following orders; it's just kind of more along the lines of like, yeah, that's how I feel about this, what do you think, and then just kind of spitball.

In this duo, both artists were working on pieces that were representations of cultural and socio-political themes representative of Bermudian culture. Through research, Chris illustrated learning many new terms and concepts. Chris noted he learned some:

> new terms, specifically these words that fit around very specific things, like redlining and how are we going to apply that to Bermuda, class antagonism, which is easily applicable. Yeah, so I'm just going off of the top of my head, but yeah, some of these definitions. We've thought it would be interesting to package it in a way that it was easily palatable and easily digested. Sorry, that's probably a better word. Because we've come to the conclusion that a lot of these words, people don't think are applicable to Bermuda. But in actuality, it's just because we don't think these things are discussed enough or at least not to the general public.

Chris explained how self-initiated research had not been a common practice for him, but he was learning the value of researching ideas for inspiration. Although he described the co-creation as a positive experience, Chris recommended that individuals looking to co-create should engage in

"starter conversations" to "ensure compatibility and a similar sense of artist style." Physical proximity was important to Chris. He described how sharing in-person conversations connects individuals on a level different than a virtual connection is able to offer. Talking about working in-person, he said:

> You'll get a lot more earnest conversations that way, perhaps. We're obviously social beings, and also just, again, working in the same space, there was a lot of obviously passing the baton as opposed to gradually working on things together because one thing depended on the other to be done.

He also recommended that individuals seeking to co-create should:

> talk about patience and [try] to consider what would be equal footing, and the discussion of what can coexist as far as each person's own style or aesthetic and ideals, trying to discuss. That is really the key to it all.

When talking to the artists, I asked about any reconsiderations for how to move forward. How could the process of co-creation be improved? As reported, this duo described how communication was crucial to the success of a project. Both partners needed to have a clear understanding of roles, steps, and actions. Keyon explained how:

> trying to do things over the phone, explaining things over the phone, there was some degree of difficulty. Well, not so much, but just the fact that you have to be a little bit more concise in your written word at this time.

Final Product

For Duo 2, the project's completion produced a series of graphic images of definitions that they said were culturally relevant to the Bermudian community. Noting the importance of language in institutionalized racism, the duo described wanting to create art that highlighted the presence of racism in a direct way. Examples of the finished pieces of Duo 2 are presented in Figure 4. Additional pieces are also included in Appendix D.

Figure 4. *Artifacts 2 and 3, Created by Duo 2 (2020)*

Duo 3: Lily and Dana

The artists of Duo 3 were Lily (pseudonym), a self-described art artist-educator, and Dana (pseudonym), a self-described photographer. Both artists were familiar with, and held respect for, each other's work and style prior to this study but had not previously collaborated. At one point, the two women applied to enter an art show together, but their proposal had not been selected. Lily was recruited first and suggested that she would like to partner with Dana, who was then also recruited and agreed to partner with Lily.

Phase I: Onboarding Interview

In my initial conversations with Lily, she mentioned one previous experience with co-creation. She described how she was approached by one of her art students wanting to buy one of her previous charcoal pieces of animals. She said that the student wanted to take the artwork and add his graffiti style to the piece. Lily said she was not sure about this initially, but after some thought and understanding of the student's intent, she created a new piece for him to use and gifted it to him. Later, after adding his graffiti style, he had the new piece on exhibit, and

Lily was given credit. She felt that this was co-creation, and, in a sense, it was a piece that was created with the work of two artists.

Dana was initially recommended as a potential project partner by Lily and agreed to partner with her for this study. Just as I began with Lily, I wanted to get a sense of what experience Dana had had with co-creation. Our first conversation began with me asking about past collaborative experiences. She did not go into details; however, Dana did explain how any past "collaborations" had been more commercial and not project collaborations with another artist.

In considering her partnership with Dana, Lily described the importance of "working with someone who already had similarities in their work or in their concepts they were working with," as there are fewer obstacles to overcome in co-creating when pre-existing similarities exist. In forecasting how she anticipated the co-creation would go with Lily, Dana described being excited about the co-creation opportunity and explained how the study would challenge her in a positive way. She explained that she felt positive and excited, saying that she was looking forward to working with Lily. In line with one of Lily's responses, Dana noted that this project was something she could hold on to during these strange times (i.e., COVID-19). As Dana continued the conversation, I noticed that she had a similar perspective about co-creation to her partner:

> I think you ... almost like getting into a relationship, a romantic relationship, you have to kind of feel out the person a little bit. There's a certain amount of sort of, well, are we connected in any way in similar ideas or are we always going to be battling each other? Or is that good that we're battling each other?

During the onboarding interview, Lily mentioned a need for structure multiple times, and Dana described how this project would have a framework, deadline, and parameters that would help guide the partnership to a definite result. However, Dana did share some of her

apprehensions of the co-creation process. As a self-described "follower," Dana was apprehensive about what her potential reactions would be throughout discussions with her partner. She wanted to ensure that her voice and ideas came through as an equal part of the co-creation. I asked Dana what her expectations were for this project. What did she hope to gain or learn from working with Lily? Dana described how she really wanted the project to work out and that it might offer her greater insight into working with others, to develop skills such as delegation and collaboration.

Despite her initial stated apprehensions, Dana expressed a need and a want to work with others. She described feeling frustrated with not having someone with whom she could share her inspirational moments, and how having someone to listen and understand was important to her. Dana said that a partner allows for a "breakthrough that you can have when you're working on something or when you get stuck, having someone else to unstick you." Dana also noted, however, that sharing artwork that is personal can be fearful and cause worries about letting a partner down.

I asked Lily about co-creating with Dana and what her expectations were for getting started. For this project, Lily stressed that she knew there would not be a lack of ideas. She mentioned they would visit some websites, such as Google Art and Culture, that could help provide ideas. Lily explained that she liked the idea of a focus on arms.

As my initial conversation with Lily progressed, I asked her how she was feeling about the project, and she shared how she was excited. Normally, Lily would have a busy daily routine with kids, school, and work. However, the restrictions of the pandemic had changed her normal routine. She described how the project would give her some structure, which she was missing from her old routine. I was curious how the two topics were related. How was daily structure

related to her excitement for the project? She noted that the excitement was due to the new circumstances. Normally, before the pandemic, Lily noted that she would have to squeeze a project like this into a full schedule. Now, she explained, she did not feel so rushed. I was curious about the fact that the project was bringing Lily structure, which was causing excitement; what other initial feelings was she experiencing related to scheduling?

Lily described how she was accustomed to a busy schedule and lifestyle, and that the unstructured days, resulting from the pandemic, were causing her depression. She indicated how she is normally a social person. As an art teacher, she said she liked the challenges her students brought, which helped to "keep yourself going."

Dana described her professional work as contrarian, producing pieces that are unexpected. She also described herself as over-analytical, noting how it is important to be aware of who you are and how you present yourself.

One fear or worry Lily highlighted was getting started on the collaboration. Lily noted how hard starting a painting or a project can be. She explained how she witnessed this regularly with her art students and stressed that she and her partner would have to "try and put something down, and see where it goes." She also noted how the "time crunch" element of this co-creation added a little stress to the project. However, she appeared to understand the importance of having an endpoint. When I asked Lily how she thought the project would progress, she responded that she felt there would be a lot of philosophical discussions between herself and Dana. Examples of debate might include "I think we should try this. Well, what does that say?" She noted that she was ready to get started and was looking forward to her first conversation with Dana.

In wrapping up our initial conversation, Dana explained that she was up for the challenge. Reflecting on the prospect of working with Lily during this co-creation, Dana noted:

> I really like her vibe, and kind of who she is. So, I'm looking forward to collaborating with her. And I'm not intimidated by her, but yet I respect her. So, I think it's actually a really interesting person for me to be working with because I think if I'm in the slightest intimidated by someone, I just defer to them. And so, I feel like with this project, I can definitely stand up for myself and have the confidence enough to be a good co-collaborator.

However, in her closing remarks, one phrase stood out to me. She said, "I will communicate with you if I feel that I'm kind of tapping out, because that's what I'm used to doing."

Phase II: Process Interview

In some of her first exchanges with Dana, Lily described sharing some similar ideas with her partner and was hopeful that this study would lead to other projects in the future. Lily explained how, when she was offering some positive comments on a particular photograph of Dana's, she was surprised to learn that Dana felt Lily would make a great portrait subject based on the colors, patterns, and textures Lily often wears. Lily explained how she studied textiles during her undergraduate degree, sharing that she does use a lot of vibrant, fun, and happy textures and patterns in her work. They described how this initial conversation eventually led from social exchanges to brainstorming.

As Lily had mentioned to me earlier, she restated how brainstorming in her first conversation with Dana revolved around the ideas of passing back and forth photographs to work with. She continued to share some of the brainstorming conversations, as well as some thoughts on ideas with mirrors and reflections. Although Lily expressed how she was usually not a fan of digital art, she and her partner discussed possibilities in this area, for example, Lily printing some of Dana's photos to paint on.

Still situated toward the initial months of the co-creation, Dana described how she felt excited about what may lie ahead for the project. Dana said she had experienced positive communication with her partner so far and noted that she felt the partnership was a "good

union." She also told me how hard it was to stay focused when working remotely. Mentioning two calls with Lily, Dana described how they were still in the process of narrowing down their ideas to settle on a decision. Dana explained how one of the ideas was layering work using photos. Although a definite decision was not made at this point in the process, Dana seemed happy to know that they were not experiencing a shortage of ideas. One challenge that she initially noted was not related to her partner, but rather to her usual artistic practice. She explained how the pandemic did not allow her to visit with Lily in her personal space, which is how she typically began her process:

> As a photographer and an artist, being in her space and seeing it and interacting with her, then all the juicy details that I love as a portrait photographer to like ... I find out what her story is by seeing it, so that's been kind of torturous in a way because it's like I normally am in it taking the pictures, even if they're just sketches.

Dana suggested that the co-creation process was not a natural process, and she was having to adjust to incorporate another person into her process. She also explained how her life situation during the pandemic was time-consuming, giving me a glimpse of what her home life was like:

> Just the circumstance that our lives are all topsy-turvy and my living room is a school, her living room is a school and all the things that are going on right now. So, I think that's been the most challenging, is just sort of like, "Okay, I need to put some time aside just to focus on this." But I think that's true with everything at the moment.

In my first process interview with Lily, she also suggested that the pandemic was forcing her to alter her normal artistic practice:

> Covid restricted our movements literally, so we couldn't ... we could have had this great ideas and then said, "Oh, we'll jump in our cars tomorrow, meet each other and make something literally" or arrange stuff we have and maybe because we were definitely going through that, like, "Oh, I'll come to your studio, you have a load of stuff there we could then photograph and manipulate and just make something physically right there." So we didn't have the opportunity to do that, although we definitely had that idea.

As the co-creation progressed, Lily explained that she and her collaborative partner had very different approaches to handling things but were able to find similarities somewhere in the middle of the differences. Lily noted that, in her conversations with her partner, she found that she was struggling to really listen, with full focus. She shared how many things were running through her mind that were pulling her attention in different directions. She decided to keep a journal to help her focus on the conversations and help her make connections. She began to describe how she prefers to work at a fast pace, and that this co-creation presented a barrier to her maintaining momentum. Although she initially viewed her partner as someone that could keep her accountable, she noted that my checking in on their progress was helping keep her on task. When I asked Lily to describe how others may feel going through a similar experience, she said:

> Yeah, the comfort, I guess, in having something a bit stable there. It really is, actually, the more I think about it. The excitement. I mean, I might have to order some art supplies. It's always exciting. Or go sort of on little excursions to find objects that I need for the project, things like that. So yeah, so what would they be feeling. Yeah, there's like a little light. At the end of the hallway, there's a little spark there. Yeah, it's that excitement, really.

However, despite the "spark," both artist-mothers described waning motivation over the course of the project. Nevertheless, such external demands did not sour the collaborative experience for either of them. Throughout their interactions, the artists described developing friendship through the discovery of their similarities. Dana said:

> I feel like she's really easy to work with and communicate with. And I feel like, in the process of this, something is coming out as it's both as artists, both as women, both as mothers, and we're kind of, not finishing each other's sentences, but we're getting to a place where I feel like it's just working really well.

Dana similarly suggested:

> Because we knew each other a little, but not really well when we started the project, it's sort of the professional and the personal is all kind of in one and I really quite, I like that fact that I feel like my relationship with her as a person. It's very much based around

> us as being artists and I really liked that and I enjoy that with her.... I feel like in a way I'm just sort of surprised just how quickly in a way she's sort of become one of my creative people. You know, sort of one of my touchstones. So that's, yeah, that's been a little surprising.

Lily echoed this sentiment from Dana:

> It's been great to have another professional artist to kind of talk to, so that. And I think it will have created a bond that we'll probably work together now sort of going forward. I can see the ideas from this project, I don't think are going to go away. I think we'll just keep working with them. If that makes sense.

Further into our second process conversation, Dana explained her work style as opposite to her partner's. Dana explained that typically,

> I'm just very reactionary, I'm a very "Last-minute Lucy." I stew on things for a long time, and then I get to a point where I'm like "Okay, execute." Whereas this process, it's a lot of discussion, obviously remote, and yeah, it's just a very different process. I think when I'm just doing it in my head, there's a lot that happens in my head before I actually put brush to paper, so to speak. So, yeah, that's very different, and it's good for me. It's more challenging for me, but it's definitely good for me to be more structured.

The term "structure" was used in many conversations with Lily and Dana. I asked Dana to explain more about the structure of this co-creation. She said, "I think it's the structure that she and I have been building. To be honest, I feel like we're kind of ignoring the study." She explained that the shared ideas were the structure. Finding their "flow" among all their ideas and conversations was driving the structure of their project. Dana also shared excitement about working out of her natural comfort zone. She expressed that, in collaboration, you have to let a little of yourself go for co-creation to be successful, noting:

> You have to let a little bit of yourself go and kill your darlings, but actually, that's probably a good thing, at the inception stage particularly. I'm inadvertently editing, in my mind, ideas and things because I know it would never work with her. So, I think it forces you to challenge yourself a bit. So, I think that's a good thing to ... for me at least. So, that's a good thing to know. And then, also, that it's a slower process.... But it's also quite invigorating.

Lily stressed how the co-creation offered excitement, comfort, and stability, as compared to normal, individual practice, describing how she felt "less alone in [my] own practice of art ... I

didn't expect that." Lily also explained how the experience of working with another artist was enjoyable:

> I'm enjoying talking with somebody else about a single piece of art, which is quite nice…. While I don't usually work with others; it's quite nice to be able to talk to someone about art. Yeah. It's nice.

Lily elaborated:

> Yeah, I think that's the main thing is you're listening to what the other is saying, seeing if that connects with your idea in any way. And then I guess there's a true comparison contrast with if we could use that when it might say something differently. Dana and I did come to the conclusion yesterday. We needed to figure out what we wanted to say. Like you do with any piece of artwork. Oh, what's the point? What are we doing this for? So we thought we should do, between this week and next week, we'll try and be a bit more synced with, "Okay, well you were trying to say this. I'm trying to say that." I think we're fairly close.

During the final process interview, Dana described how the collaborative process was challenging and novel to her. Dana noted that she was struggling to set aside time to focus: "So, I think that's been the most challenging, is just to say sort of like, 'Okay, I need to put some time aside just to focus on this.' But I think that's true with everything at the moment." She also described enduring some growing pains, as she faced challenges that required her to develop a new dimension to her work. Collaboration offered Dana the partnership and communication she was seeking to solve for her loneliness, noting it was a major adjustment that she kept to herself: "I haven't specifically spoken to her [Lily] about how this period and this project with her is it's making me reassess how I kind of conceive of my working practice." Dana also shared her struggles with collaboration: "So, but I don't want to give the impression that it's been a negative experience. It's definitely been a positive experience, particularly working with her, but yeah, we definitely stalled."

Despite the challenges they were facing, Dana demonstrated a positive attitude, and laid no blame on her partner:

> I think for me the greatest thing that I've learned and I'm really enjoying doing is by working with someone else, not only are you inspired by them, but also by having someone else's mind, her mind goes to places that mine wouldn't have naturally. And so, yeah, I'm learning that if you're kind of open to others or you're open to just sort of changing your mindset, then you might come up with something that's even more impactful or beautiful or whatever you're trying to do in your work. So, I think that's been the positive thing that I've learned.

In speaking with Lily at the same point of the process, she said, "I'm feeling like we're running out of time." She had expressed concerns about time since the very beginning: "There's a time crunch element to [this co-creation]. Which adds a little bit more stress than I would like." Lily explained further:

> There's much more flow and fluid and it feels a shame to put a deadline because the ideas are, you just kind of have to let things develop. But that said, the things won't develop unless ... they won't develop in any reasonable time frame unless we put a deadline on it.

Like Dana, Lily also repeatedly mentioned how excited she was to have this project in her life. She mentioned various times how much she enjoyed her conversations with her partner, but described how they still had not come to an agreement about what they would create. While their initial conversations hovered over the possibility of exchanging photographs back and forth and working from them, later conversations switched over to sculptures or a dollhouse. At this point, Dana described how they needed a firm decision. However, once they did arrive at a decision about what would be created, Lily said:

> I think, subconsciously, images just [started to] sort of flow out. And they did, it was like it was as good as going for a walk or for a swim, you felt like you've done something productive and you have an image that you can talk about or not, we didn't end up talking about them, but—well, maybe a little bit, we just started joking and laughing about them.

Lily explained that, after some humorous exchanges, she suggested coming up with a brainstorm list. She quickly came up with a list of 20 words that she could categorize to represent what she was feeling [about the pandemic]. Once she had her words on paper, she was ready to create something; however, she described how she reminded herself that this was a co-creation,

and she waited on the 20 words from her partner to compare and discuss. Although Lily showed eagerness about working with her partner, she reported feeling guilty at times for worrying about the time crunch. She noted she understood that her partner was potentially busier with work and scheduling, saying, "I should be able to get this done. Why can't we get it organized?" Not knowing that her partner was sharing a similar self-critique, Dana shared that this experience:

> really opened my eyes to a little more of my process and how scatological and how kind of maybe time optimistic and maybe slightly disorganized my process normally is, but then also it's opened my eyes to think and looking at things in a different way and having a slightly different perspective and how that's very beneficial.

Phase III: Exit Interview

As I learned from the exit interview, Lily described how the duo settled on a list of 20 words, and each artist created visual representations of the selected words. Lily noted that she often acts while her ideas are fresh and new; yet, as a representation of only half of a whole, she described practicing constraint and patience in waiting for her partner. Still, she described how she sketched these ideas as they came to her and would address them later with Dana. In recounting the moment the duo arrived at their final decision, Dana seemed to deflect the question and instead suggested that "the central strength and inspiration of the whole project was the fact that I was working with her, not the fact that I needed to express what these pictures expressed."

Noting how she would normally proceed on the execution of her ideas, this co-creation was much different than what Dana said she was used to:

> I think working with [Lily] has kept me on point with that, but then at the same time, because of the nature of the medium that I work in and the instantaneous nature of it and the solitary nature of it, and yes, you can do big shoots and have lots of people doing different elements of it, but I am always the camera operator. I am always the one seeing through the lens, which is the final product. So, and because it's 250th of a second or whatever it is, that immediacy, this is a very different thing. So yeah. You know, being a lot more planned out and fleshing out the concepts before I even shoot a frame. I think that's been the biggest difference.

The spread between her normal individual creation and this co-creation was also noted by Lily, who said:

> Co-creation type of work can be, it's another avenue for creating, so another way of doing it.... [It is] much more self-reflective than I thought it would. I thought it would be much more sort of, ah, you have to figure out how the other person works and figure out how to get along with them. But I guess I'm surprised in that in doing that; you go, oh, how do I work? A lot more digging around in your own self than I thought there would be.

Probing to understand more about her surprise, Lily explained how in co-creation there was a sacrifice that resulted in "bonding, and I mean, it's sort of personal. I mean, you're sharing kind of a personal ... just we're sharing quite personal habits and ways that we work." She also noted how co-creation made her "feel less alone in [her] own practice of art.... I didn't expect that."

During the final interview, I asked Dana to share a memorable experience during her time with Lily. She said that the most noteworthy moment during her entire experience was similar to that of Lily, who said that it was a moment where they were "totally in sync." She said:

> There was a point at the middle where she and I had a conversation, it was a really long call, and just the inspiration, and not necessarily the execution, but the direction all came together, and all of our talks, and everything we had done building up to that, within this project and maybe beyond it, because we came to a place where we found each other a little bit because we knew we wanted to do something together, but there was this one conversation where it just all came together, and we were vibing, so to speak, in terms of working together. And so in a way, it was super emblematic of doing this whole project under these circumstances because it was great, and it was positive, and I'm pretty certain we both felt energized.

Similarly, when I asked Lily about what was most easy for her about the whole experience, she noted that it was:

> the conceptual flow, that was really easy and really great because that's something I'm doing in my head on my own all the time. So to have this other person to vibe off or flow off, because it's endlessly inspirational.

During the exit interview, I asked Dana and Lily what they might have learned as a result of this experience of co-creation. Both Lily and Dana described that, through making art with one another, they learned some things along the way. Dana shared:

> I've learned that my experience is as valid an inspiration as a commission, in summary. And also that, by letting someone else and working with them, and if you don't agree with what they're saying or being able to edit in or out their input, just that working with someone else and having a sounding board, or having a counterpoint, it just adds to the work. I mean it might be a little more complicated to work together, but I think I've learnt that it's missing. It's been missing a bit from my work.... So, I definitely have learned a lot from it. It's been a very positive experience for me, more than anything, just to remind myself that I cannot isolate myself like I do, and I can't work in this little individual bubble. I have to collaborate with others.

Noting a similar experience of learning through interactions with her partner, Lily described a change in her thoughts about her own practice:

> I used to have these hard fast ideas about when you're making art, and I guess if it translates into your audience or not...but yeah, I guess I also learned that ... or I got a better sense that my artwork is valid. It's definitely shifted my perspective in a positive direction. I think [co-creation] is more worthwhile for me. Actually, a lot more than more worthwhile. I think it's almost essential that I integrate it into my practice.

Although issues of time and structure were discussed often during the prior phases of the interviews, the artists did not spend much time speaking about these issues during the exit interview. Dana suggested that they "had a lot of time" and they "misused the time by not preparing ourselves in the most efficient way sometimes." She elaborated:

> I know that I am unrealistic when it comes to deadlines and things. And I feared that maybe she and I are similar in some ways. And so I think early on, we were almost a little bit dreamy, and not in a good way.... It doesn't feel like it has a ending, which I think is a good thing with art.

Lily took a slightly different stance, noting that she and her partner would yoyo between needing structure and finding structure confining. When asked what she might do differently if she was to press 'reset' on the experience, Lily responded:

> What would I do differently? Work on a schedule ... the structure and the deadlines help; they give you incentive, right? "Okay, so we need to get this done by this amount of

> time." Although just the way [Dana] and I work together, there's much more flow and fluid, and it feels a shame to put a deadline because the ideas are, you just kind of have to let things develop. But that said, the things won't develop unless ... they won't develop in any reasonable time frame unless we put a deadline on it, right?

COVID-19

Social distancing guidelines due to COVID-19 brought an additional layer of complexity to this study. As a mother, Dana noted changes in her family structure as a result of COVID-19, and the accompanying challenges during the co-creation as:

> underlying, not anxieties, about the situation that are always with us because the intensity of our children being calm, parenthood is always with us. So, we definitely talked about how it's very different right now.

Lily, also a mother, shared experiencing ambiguity as a result of COVID-19, explaining that she liked knowing what to plan for, and COVID-19 presented her with uncertainty. Lily said:

> With the COVID, I'm waiting for Monday to plan like, "Well, what are we doing at school? Can I do the summer camp? What will I do with my children over the summer?" But summer is stretching out; it's a very long period of time with nothing to do.

Additionally, Lily explained the demands on their resources created by both the pandemic and participation in this study:

> So, I have three children, Dana has two children, we're sort of ... one, our separate professional art and then Dana does that for her business, I then have a day job, granted I'm off for teaching and so on. But yeah, so I think we've both carved out our own patterns in how we live and work, and so then trying to insert another factor into it just becomes trickier.

During the exit interview, I asked Lily if she was turning to art more since the pandemic began. She described a special moment in which she was trying to entertain her youngest child in her art studio. As her youngest was creating with paint sticks, her older teenagers came in, and Lily offered them some paper to create with their younger sister. She said that, for three incredible hours, everyone was making something. Lily described how this session was similar

to art therapy, and she planned to have more special moments like this one with her family if the pandemic continued.

Summary

Reaching the end of the co-creation, the artists described experiences of partnership, with many twists and turns and shifting emotions. The artists described excitement and enthusiasm at the outset, and worry and stress as the deadline began to loom. Additionally, as mothers, Lily and Dana described augmenting the demands of their families and daily schedules to meet virtually and produce a joint piece of art on a deadline. However, reflecting on the experience, Dana and Lily each noted a desire to build collaboration in their artistic practices. Lastly, in reflecting on her experience, Dana described how:

> moving forward, I think [I need to] let people in in a way that I haven't before, and that would be the co-creation in terms of them being an artist as well, but maybe it's within the images themselves.

Final Product

Duo 3 described their final art pieces as inspired by their shared meaning of experiencing COVID-19. The duo narrowed a list of 20 words down to eight ideas, which were then divided into three concepts. The concepts covered both positive and negative feelings associated with COVID-19 and included visual images that depicted these feelings. Examples of the final pieces are presented in artifacts 4 and 5 (Figure 7), as well as Appendix E.

Figure 7. *Artifacts 4 and 5, Created by Duo 3 (2020)*

Cross-Portrait Themes

In the previous chapter, I followed the suggestions of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis to craft three duo portraits that reflected the perspectives of the participants as well as the complexity of the total participant experience. In this section, I will present the emergent themes derived from these three portraits, a cross-portrait, and a descriptive synthesis of the duo experiences. Utilizing the rich description of the portraits presented at the start of this chapter, this section draws together the lived experiences of the participating artists, using a descriptive, cross-portrait evaluation of themes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis discussed how themes often arise out of the scattered pieces of data gathered, noting that "they are not, however, stated as (or meant to be) propositions to be proved or disproved" (p. 201). By presenting the data in portraits, the researcher can then synthesize the scattered pieces of data into emergent themes utilizing the data analysis methods of portraiture. This descriptive synthesis reflects the emergent themes of the artists' experiences of co-creating art as derived from the portraits. I also explain what these themes mean in the context of this study. These themes are reported here in a synthesis drawn

from the portraits of the artists' experience of co-creation. Following the presentation of these themes, using the portraiture approach as explained in Chapter 3, I will then describe the complexity of the participant experiences of co-creation, as gleaned from further discussion with the artists.

As this study employed a portraiture approach to analysis, as presented by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), the themes of the experience of co-creating art with a partner were identified through an analysis of the portraits. Throughout the research study and portrait creation, six themes emerged (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). These themes do not represent any particular order of importance. The most compelling themes that best reflect the artists' experiences in this co-creative context are:

(1) Relationship and Connection—The experience of mutual closeness and access to vulnerable spaces into which others are not normally welcomed during an artist's working process.

(2) Context and Structure—The interrelated conditions, settings, and limitations of the experience related to time, task, purpose, methods, and definitions.

(3) Seeing Differently—Seeing something in a context that brings awareness to one's ways of thinking, feeling, working, seeing, or evaluating.

(4) Finding Agreements—Blending diverse perspectives, preferences, and artistic styles in co-creation.

(5) Developing Creative Rhythms—The interplay of the experience related to the temporal development of the creative process.

(6) Learning in Partnership—Does not denote reciprocated or communicated learning between participants, but instead describes an experience of learning that occurred in the partnered task of the study, the co-creation of art.

Because the portraits represent personal narratives of each artist's co-creation experience, each section will include supporting examples that are essential and relevant to the resulting theme. These examples are representative here in the chapter text, and are presented more directly in Appendix D in a table presenting an organization of the themes that emerged from the portrait analysis, with quotations relevant to each theme. While not required by this reporting format, this table does illustrate how the themes were drawn out of the portraits and interviews, should the reader wish to consult it.

Descriptive Synthesis of the Emergent Themes

A descriptive synthesis seeks to create a whole representation of the experience, blending the insight and emotion of the constituent parts to develop a synthesis that informs and inspires (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Creating the portraits allowed the unique themes to emerge, to describe how much or how many constituent parts make up the whole experience. By contrast, in this synthesis, I am attending to the representative experiences that run through and across the duos and also any variance that could be important to understanding co-creation more broadly from this sample. As the researcher, I am "trusting that the truth of the experience does not reside in a single voice, but in the complex interplay of voices, the rich resonances of intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, and ethical currents" (p. 191). In this sense, the synthesis is distinct from the phenomenological notion of the essence, as based on the interplay of voices and the absence of any singular expression of the lived experience. As the authors have written:

> There is a generative tension embraced by portraitists: the tension between organization and classification on the one hand and maintaining the rich complexity of

> human experience on the other ... the portraitist does not try to resolve this tension by choosing one side over the other. Rather she works to maintain the tension and experience the dialectic between these two approaches to thematic development. (p. 192)

When interpreting and synthesizing the portraits, I committed to staying grounded in representing the authentic experience of the artists, according to the position of the portraitist researcher and the purpose of the synthesis. It is from this commitment that I have confidence that these themes reflect the nuance of the real lived experience. The following sections will explain and expand on each of the six themes that emerged from the study.

Relationship and Connection

In the portraits, the participants experienced bonding and access to vulnerable, artistic spaces that are normally private. From this description of their lived experience of co-creating art with another artist, the theme of relationship and connection emerged as particularly resonant. The artists in this study noted that creating art is often considered a very personal, individual pursuit, which can often result in closing oneself off from the other. However, co-creating with another artist in this study allowed someone else into this precious, personal, creative space. Participants also noted that, in co-creation, they experienced vulnerability while attempting to create art with another artist who had different expectations, communication preferences, artistic styles, mediums, and techniques compared with their own. This theme of relationship and connection also represents the development of mutual trust during the co-creation between the artists in their duos.

For example, the duo of Keyon and Chris experienced empathy, compassion, and support from their co-creative partner that went beyond the scope of the study. During the study, this duo experienced profound examples of loss, grief, social isolation, and technological disruption. Some of these examples were created or impacted by COVID-19, and others were compounded by the pandemic, as the two members of this duo were never able to meet face to face during

their co-creation. To cope with many of these stressors, the duo reported that participating in the co-creation and being able to lean on another for support were beneficial.

Keyon shared, "While I was social distancing and going through all these pandemic protocols, I had the opportunity to be still, and literally, some of my conversations [with Chris] lasted for two to three hours." Walking away from the study, Keyon noted that, as a result of his experience with Chris, "I realized that intimacy and tangibility are important for me to create art." Echoing similar sentiments to Keyon, as Chris came to terms with the conclusion of the co-creation during the exit interview, he rued, "Who knows when the next time will be when I'll [get the chance to] collaborate with somebody on an equal footing?"

Anthony and Nathaniel's description revealed the development of a relationship and connection during their co-creation as "rapport and friendship and an understanding of each other's personalities." Although Anthony and Nathaniel were the most familiar with each other at the outset, as compared to the participants in the other duos, Anthony reported that his participation in this co-creation added depth and respect to their existing, close relationship. Of this experience, he reported:

> [It} forced me to look at Nathaniel a little closer. I am more impressed with his [pause] I think it was more impressive the way he really put the [pause] the experience has just further emphasized for me of his genuine love for what he does. And I hope that he sees that as well with me.

In speaking about co-creating art with his partner as opposed to creating art alone, Nathaniel reported that co-creating with Anthony offered him a:

> sense of camaraderie. It's good to know that someone else believes in something and takes something as seriously and wants to do something as much as I do. I think we've talked before about how the human perspective is isolating, so it's the opposite of that. It's like, "Oh, right, this dude gets it, we're on the same page." We're working towards something together instead of getting in each other's way. So that's all very enriching.

Echoing the sentiment of his partner, Anthony concurred:

> Sometimes just to know that somebody else is in that same boat, somebody else is going through the exact same thing. They may have the same concerns or the same challenges or dry moments, or even moments where everything's cooking. Just to know there's another person who's experiencing the same thing you are right now, in a way, is helpful.

Although Dana and Lily were the least aware of one another at the start of the study, compared with the participants of the other duos, the portraits reveal that they also developed and experienced relationship and connection. For Lily and Dana, their relationship developed over a longer period of time, as their co-creation experience lasted two months longer than those of the other duos. During this time, their relationship seemed to ebb and flow as they found their way together. Ultimately, their strong bond, while created quickly, caught them both by surprise. In speaking about making art with Dana during the co-creation, Lily shared her surprise about how Dana made her feel "less alone in [my] own practice of art ... I didn't expect that." Dana also shared how surprised she was about the development of their relationship, noting:

> Because we knew each other a little, but not really well when we started the project, it's sort of the professional and the personal is all kind of in one and I really quite, I like that fact that I feel like my relationship with her as a person. It's very much based around us as being artists and I really liked that and I enjoy that with her.... I feel like in a way I'm just sort of surprised just how quickly in a way she's sort of become one of my creative people. You know, sort of one of my touchstones. So that's, yeah, that's been a little surprising.

These sentiments were echoed by Lily:

> It's been great to have another professional artist to kind of talk to, so that. And I think it will have created a bond that we'll probably work together now sort of going forward. I can see the ideas from this project, I don't think are going to go away. I think we'll just keep working with them. If that makes sense.

In summary, the closeness that was reported from the duos of this study was not just for the sake of friendship or moral support in general. Their overall sense of increased closeness was focused toward the co-creative task. Moreover, this focus on the task blurred boundaries of the

personal as some participants began to lean on their co-creators for support. This closeness, then, is best themed as relationship and connection.

Context and Structure

As the researcher in this dissertation study, I set context and structure that limited the scope of my inquiry by time, task, purpose, methods, and definitions. These guidelines were meant to focus and direct the work, the participant task, the data gathering, the analysis, the interpretations, and the reporting. Similarly, in the participants' experience as represented in the portraits, they also sought to put in place their own context and structure insofar as possible, whether set by circumstance or their own doing, such as physical proximity, time constraints, or technology. While, in some connotations, such context and structure may be perceived as negative restraints, a more inclusive understanding of context and structure acknowledges that they may also be perceived as constraints—some of which may even create opportunities for positive results. In the portraits, the constraints reported by the artists are themed as contexts and structures, as they explain how they scaffolded the pacing of the experience and clarity of the task. For example, although Nathaniel and Anthony initially reported their dislike of the structured co-creation and sought to follow their own structure, they came to see some of the benefits of the structure that was set by the study. In the exit interview, Nathaniel reported that the structure of the experience enabled him to spend more time on his own work, which had a positive impact on life outside the study:

> So I guess, actually, the real answer would be, it offered me structure because doing this project and helping other people with their projects [as an art teacher] gave me a reason to go to bed because I have to be ready for the next day.

Physical proximity presented another structural component, a physical one, as COVID-19 created restrictions that prevented participants from working together in person by law. For instance, Dana and Lily found that their multiple obligations to family and work during

COVID-19 made it difficult to set and follow structures. Noting the effects of these restrictions, Lily reported:

> COVID restricted our movements literally, so we couldn't ... we could have had these great ideas and then say, "Oh, we'll jump in our cars tomorrow, meet each other and make something literally," or arrange stuff we have and maybe because we were definitely going through that, like, "Oh, I'll come to your studio, you have a load of stuff there we could then photograph and manipulate and just make something physically right there." So, we didn't have the opportunity to do that, although we definitely had that idea.

Keyon reported that restricting physical proximity prompted him to reflect on his co-creation with Chris. Noting that he preferred to work face to face when creating, he said:

> Distance does something that I have to take into consideration when creating ... staying dialed in is a whole lot more difficult ... because you're feeding off of each other's energy, it's tangible, it's real.

Participants described experiences with time structures that were part of the boundedness of this study. Each duo was presented with a deadline for the study, as the research needed an ending point to gather and synthesize the data, and each duo was responsible for their own time management and progression toward the deadline. At one point or another, all duos shared how their co-creation experience was influenced by time. For example, Keyon stated, "We've had to make do with whatever time was allotted to us. Our schedules were drastically different." Dana's interview data also reflected how time management was part of the co-creation experience, noting a need to set aside time to focus as based on the time allotted to her: "So, I think that's been the most challenging, is just to say sort of like, 'Okay, I need to put some time aside just to focus on this.' But I think that's true with everything at the moment." Interestingly, although Lily reported feeling as though she experienced the stress of having a "time crunch" early in the co-creation, during the exit interview she reported the unintended benefits of the structure:

> There's much more flow and fluidity and it feels a shame to put a deadline because … you just kind of have to let things develop. But that said, the things won't develop unless ... they won't develop in any reasonable time frame unless we put a deadline on it.

Participants also noted that time constraints, set by me or by themselves, seemed to limit their ideas of what was possible for the co-creation. At the conclusion of the study, Anthony shared that, in the future, the end result of a project such as this one could be different, based on different perceptions on the length of the timeline. This was evident in the portraits, where Chris explained how a slower pace would make him think more about what he is working on. Conversely, Dana explained how she and Lily "have had a lot of time, and so I think we misuse the time by not preparing ourselves in the most efficient way sometimes."

All the participants had to grapple with the virtual boundaries of technology. Early on in the project, the government issued proximity restrictions associated with COVID-19. The duos all had to complete the co-creation virtually and were dependent on technology for connection. As noted by Chris, this boundary made the experience feel "disconnected because of relying on the devices, trying to consider the pandemic and associated loss as well as the timeliness of my MacBook screen actually going to kaput." The effects of having to use technology were felt by some participants more than others, because not all participants owned a computer. However, the duos were able to effectively navigate the boundaries of technology to successfully complete the co-creative task of the study.

In summary, participants reported varied interactions with constraints in this study. Some of these constraints were artificially constructed as necessary components of this study, whereas others were unexpected. The intentional and unintentional constraints experienced by the artists, as described in the portraits, can be best understood as the theme of context and structure of the co-creation experience.

Seeing Differently

When interpreting themes from the portraits of the duos, the artists described becoming aware of, and evaluating, their current ways of thinking, feeling, working, seeing, or evaluating. Throughout the project, artists explained how the process of co-creating helped them learn more about themselves personally and as an artist. Co-creation was also described by the artists as an activity for seeing things differently. As Nathaniel noted, "The whole point of doing collaboration is to change, to get out of your mechanisms, to change your perspective and change what you were doing. So, change itself is the goal."

In the portraiture approach to thematic analysis, described in Chapter III, the step of identifying "Institutional and Cultural Rituals" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) reveals how participants made sense of their existing institutional and cultural rituals about co-creating. For example, several of the artists in this study had little to no experience with rituals of co-creation or collaborative art making prior to this experience, such as canvas sharing or how to present collaborative or co-created works at an exhibition. However, at the conclusion of the study, several of these same artists, as well as artists that had prior experience of collaborative art making, believed that co-creation would be an essential part of their existing creative rituals (practices and or processes) going forward. For instance, Lily spoke about how this experience offered her the opportunity to see differently her "hard fast ideas" about her individual art making process. She said:

> I used to have these hard fast ideas about when you're making art, and I guess if it translates into your audience or not ... but yeah, I guess I also learned that ... or I got a better sense that my artwork is valid. It's definitely shifted my perspective in a positive direction. I think [co-creation] is more worthwhile for me. Actually, a lot more than more worthwhile. I think it's almost essential that I integrate it into my practice.

Seeing differently also conveys the movements someone makes, consciously or unconsciously, from one way of thinking, feeling, knowing, working, or evaluating, to another.

The artists in this study described seeing differently by reflecting on what they were experiencing in the context and container of this co-creation. For example, Nathaniel suggested:

> Oh, collaboration gives me access to another person's perspective I wouldn't normally have. That gives me the opportunity to see from that perspective, which gets me out of mind, which makes me up part of the bigger whole and the bigger reality than I was before. Yeah, it's weird to call it new because I've been saying for a long time that there's a difference between knowing and knowing and it's weird.

John-Steiner (2001) has, of course, described this sense of a bigger reality in her discussion of Ernst Fischer's desire "to refer to something that is more than the 'I,'" (p. 72). Dana also described her experience of seeing differently when she suggested, "I haven't specifically spoken to her [Lily] about how this period and this project with her is [but] it's making me reassess how I kind of conceive of my working practice." Dana also went on to say, "I'd say my vantage point has changed, not just on collaborating with someone, but also the fact that we're creating work that was in response to our situation." Similarly to Dana, in reflecting on his experience of co-creating with his partner, Nathaniel described seeing his own artistic practice differently. He said:

> So, it was really neat to learn something about something that I felt I already knew everything about...Like re-seeing. Yes, yes. A re-seeing what you've.... It's like finding Waldo because you've been looking at it all that time, and it's like, "Ah! There it is." Or connecting two dots that you didn't realize connected.

Seeing differently also reflects the participants' description of taking on the perspective of the other artist in their duo or, in some cases, the perspective of the viewer of the co-created art. The resonant metaphors mode of thematic analysis in portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) allows for unearthing the rich symbolism and images the participants use to describe their experience. The special attention paid to the metaphors or imagery used in the artist participants' vernacular enabled me, as the researcher, to draw further themes from the ways they "examine and explain their vision or their actions" (p. 199). For instance, Nathaniel

described his ways of seeing, and those of his partner, using metaphors to explain to me how ideas were shared with his partner, and the viewer, regarding what they created. Using the metaphors of a table and a bridge as the "shared space," he said:

> The idea was that we were meeting each other across a great distance and projecting our understanding of the other. So we were meeting our idea of the other person. There was a table in the foreground, which went to the other person sitting at the table. So the idea is that when you look at each individual piece, you replace the other one of us meeting us at the table. So you feel like you were able or you feel like you were seeing what I saw when I came to the table. The table was both meeting ground, sort of a shared space symbolically and emotionally, as well as bridge to bridge the space between the two people, between us.

In summary, utilizing the modes of portraiture presented in Chapter III to construct the portraits offered in Chapter 4, themes surfaced that aided understanding of the experiences of co-creating artists. As a result, the portraits offer a more accessible understanding of how the theme of seeing differently was experienced by the artists during the co-creation. Artists described their experience of seeing differently and how the process of co-creating helped them learn more about themselves and their partners as people and artists.

Finding Agreements

The task of artistic co-creation in this study required the blending of diverse perspectives, preferences, and artistic styles. It also included finding agreements in the individual approaches of the participants in lieu of a shared approach. The artists described coming into the task with their typical individual approach for creating art, but then discovered a desire to find a mutual, shared approach. One artist said it this way about co-creating in this study: "Two minds [have to] come together to create" (Nathaniel). The first awareness of one's typical approach not working, that of needing to find agreement on their direction together, was also noted by Chris early on:

> I think research has been a little difficult.... Patience and.... And I think trying to find the middle ground between what we both want. Trying to practice diplomacy as well as, "Hey, this is really important to me. So can we come to a stalemate?" Or, not a stalemate, but an agreement.

Interestingly, his partner Keyon did not report the difficulty Chris experienced in finding agreements between their work, noting, "We have similar aesthetics and conceptual foundations. So, it was never really hard, It's just always kind of finding that happy medium in that creation." I also observed that Keyon's view of "finding a happy medium" reflected a more active, internal locus of control as compared to his partner. Keyon noted that they came to agreement by being "in the trenches all the time, talking about this piece that we were creating."

Nathaniel and Anthony anticipated the experience of "finding that sweet spot" as necessary and productive for the task of co-creation. Unlike the other duos, Nathaniel and Anthony said initially that they looked forward to working through their choices without giving up their strong views and beliefs. Anthony shared:

> I'm sure that it's going to be an enjoyable experience of somehow finding that sweet spot in between. Not that you're compromising, but you're trying to take the best of both approaches or opinions or perspectives to create this new thing. That sounds exciting to me.

Similarly, Nathaniel said:

> I'm looking forward to it.... I expect to share my ideas with Anthony, and have them challenged, and produce something new from the contrast of our perspectives that wouldn't have existed if either one of us tried to make it.

Despite their optimistic reporting during their onboarding interviews, I was curious whether their espoused expectations for "finding that sweet spot" would hold true. During my exit interview with Anthony after the co-creation, I reminded him of his earlier comments about his expectations for "finding that sweet spot" or finding thematic agreements. He confirmed that he maintained his earlier perspective, stating that the duo:

> followed an honest process. We shared ideas of interest for each of us. There is how they overlapped or where they overlapped, and then focused on that. And developed that and then choose a way to bring that about. The end results may be different if we did it again, but that may be based on other circumstances.

The ways in which Dana and Lily experienced the emergent theme of finding agreements was different compared to other duos in this study. They initially experienced ambiguity when beginning their introduction to the co-creative task and one another as partners. Consulting the portraiture modes of identifying cultural rituals, triangulation, and revealing patterns (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) allows for the deeper thematic coherence to emerge within the sometimes deviating, and more matter-of-fact, incoherence of the participants' reporting. To resolve the uncertainty and ambiguity this duo experienced, Dana wanted to rely on her professional, cultural ritual of exploring the subject's personal space to develop a sense of who she was. However, because of COVID-19 regulations, Dana was unable to visit Lily at her home, and instead had to rely on video conferencing to get to know her. During the first process interview, Dana confided:

> As a photographer and an artist, being in her space and seeing it and interacting with her, then all the juicy details that I love as a portrait photographer to like ... I find out what her story is by seeing it, so that's been kind of torturous in a way because it's like I normally am in it taking the pictures, even if they're just sketches.

Lily shared a similar desire to develop a relationship with Dana as a first step to forming agreement on what to create:

> I think you ... almost like getting into a relationship, a romantic relationship, you have to kind of feel out the person a little bit. There's a certain amount of sort of, well, are we connected in any way in similar ideas or are we always going to be battling each other? Or is that good that we're battling each other?

The duo reported that, as they became more familiar with each other and learned about one another's desires for what the final product might be and what medium would be used, the theme of finding agreement emerged. As Dana described:

> You have to let a little bit of yourself go and kill your darlings, but actually, that's probably a good thing, at the inception stage particularly. I'm inadvertently editing, in my mind, ideas and things because I know it would never work with her. So, I think it forces you to challenge yourself a bit. So, I think that's a good thing to ... for me at least. So,

> that's a good thing to know. And then, also, that it's a slower process.... But it's also quite invigorating.

Lily experienced this stage of their co-creation process similarly, noting:

> Yeah, I think that's the main thing is you're listening to what the other is saying, seeing if that connects with your idea in any way. And then I guess there's a true comparison contrast with if we could use that when it might say something differently. Dana and I did come to the conclusion yesterday. We needed to figure out what we wanted to say. Like you do with any piece of artwork. Oh, what's the point? What are we doing this for? So we thought we should do, between this week and next week, we'll try and be a bit more synced with, "Okay, well you were trying to say this. I'm trying to say that." I think we're fairly close.

Though the co-creation of this duo extended two months longer than they anticipated, Dana reported that they were eventually able to successfully choose a creative direction for the co-creation. She noted that this process of choosing which direction to take brought her and her partner "to a place where we found each other a little bit because we knew we wanted to do something together."

In summary, the illustrations above highlight the diverse ways in which usual approaches to one's artistic practice had to be blended between artists as the co-creation unfolded. Artists described the challenges and opportunities involved in finding agreement with their partner. The dynamics experienced by the artists as described in the portraits can be best understood as the theme of finding agreements.

Developing Creative Rhythms

Developing creative rhythms was defined earlier as the interplay of the experience related to the temporal development of the creative process. It reflects the melding together of diverse perspectives in a harmonious way, which enabled the possibility of creating something new that might not otherwise have been possible. During the initial stages of the co-creation, the artists' experiences of thematic findings of agreement were more tactical in nature, as duos came to the final decision about what would be created. However, as each duo agreed on a direction of the

co-creation, there were subtle changes in the way participants reported their co-creative experience. Although these moments of finding agreement were reported at different times of the experience for each duo, being able to successfully come to agreements about mutual directions granted duos access to a more unified, rhythmic, even whimsical stage of their art making. Experiencing creative rhythms in co-creation was not an experience of conformity or sameness, but rather a combination of their complementarity. Nathaniel, for instance, offered a resonant metaphor (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 209) for this unified feeling in an attempt to convey to me, while making sense of it himself, what the experience of co-creating was like with Anthony. He mused:

> It's like one of those moments when something clicked. It's kind of like, I don't know, you've been surrounded by this flower that you're growing in a greenhouse or something, and then you find out it cures COVID, but you've been living with it all that fucking time. You've been great, and you survived the whole thing. You're like, "What's wrong with everybody?" But then you figure it out. So here's this like revealing of what you actually are already doing and participating and seeing it for what it really is, I guess, instead of taking it for granted.

Similarly, Lily reported that she and Dana were "yin and yang," relying on a series of symbols or resonant metaphors (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 209) both in an effort to make sense herself as well as help me understand the conscious and unconscious playful dynamic that was unfolding between them:

> I think, subconsciously, images just [started to] sort of flow out. And they did, it was like it was as good as going for a walk or for a swim, you felt like you've done something productive and you have an image that you can talk about or not, we didn't end up talking about them, but—well, maybe a little bit, we just started joking and laughing about them.

Later that same day when I interviewed Dana about her experience, she reported, with equal enthusiasm:

> There was this one conversation where it just all came together, and we were vibing, so to speak, in terms of working together. And so in a way it was super emblematic of doing this whole project under these circumstances because it was great, and it was positive, and I'm pretty certain we both felt energized, and we both felt inspired.

For Keyon, he reported that his duo experienced moments of "mutual understanding in regards to change, and creating work that we don't collectively understand, but try to understand." He also reported that the experience of co-creation for the duo had become "creative catharsis ... because you're feeding off of each other's energy, it's tangible, it's real."

Anthony reported how feeling the development of a creative rhythm in co-creation with his partner produced "more of an informed work because ... two brains are better than one. And there may be considerations that you may have never gotten to learn."

In summary, following the conclusion of a thematic finding of agreement, where uncertainty around the direction and organization of the task were resolved over time, duos experienced unifying moments of creative immersion, inspiration, motivation, and positive affect. These moments can be best understood as the theme of developing creative rhythms.

Learning in Partnership

Learning in partnership as a theme of this research does not denote reciprocated or communicated learning between participants, but instead describes an experience of learning that occurred in the partnered task of the study, the co-creation of art. In this study, I define learning according to Mezirow's (1991) definition of "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (p. 12). Based on answers to the questions I raised about learning in the exit interview, the activity of co-creating art led participants to new experiences of learning newly developed knowledge and understanding, or shared experiences of how co-creation increased their capacity for creating art with more awareness of themselves, each other, and their shared practice. While increased self-awareness does not necessarily denote learning, the artists

described several instances of "learning" in which co-creation made them reevaluate and change their behavior as individuals.

For example, Keyon learned that his self-imposed limitations of communication, due to his lack of technological knowledge and access, also limited his self-expression as an artist. He explained that learning to communicate across barriers through the use of technology, especially a lack of physical proximity, was a pointed learning experience for him. Prior to this study, he did not own a laptop or a personal computer, so leveraging technology to participate in this co-creation required substantial practical learning, as well as an expansion of what he considered possible for his own expression as an artist. Interestingly, Keyon's partner, Chris, shared how he learned to be patient when working with Keyon through these limitations. Chris discovered that his willingness to be patient when working with the limitations of the other in a partnership enabled them to achieve more learning beyond the technology improvements and customary patience toward more significant learning. Chris began to recognize significant learning beyond just being patient, but toward the effects of changing his behavior in the process of artmaking to take on a more patient stance, saying, "I mean, a slower pace will ultimately make me think more about what I'm doing."

Learning in partnership in this co-creation also involves not only the content of what is being learned, but also of how one's partner influenced or impacted their learning. Anthony offered an example of this, saying, "If I'm learning anything, it's because Nathaniel and I have chosen to use basically each other as subjects, which I guess is making us think more about what we think of the other."

Part of my initial curiosity in the study was about what could be learned from creating art with another artist. Participants noted a change in their beliefs about what could be learned from

and with a partner in a shared creative context. Whereas the accepted understanding in artist culture is that art is a mostly a solo practice, these artists learned that co-creation is worthwhile because it allows them an increased awareness of their own individual artmaking that they describe as desirable learning, the challenges and obstacles notwithstanding. Dana expressed it this way: "I'd say my vantage point has changed, not just on collaborating with someone, but also the fact that we're creating work that was in response to our situation."

Many of the artists commented on how participating in this study taught them something new about their own art-making practice. As Nathaniel shared:

> Yeah, it was really cool learning something about composition and that's really great at my age and position to realize I'm open to learning because I preach that shit, but to actually do it is pretty fucking cool. Yeah, I found that I've ... What was the question? Yes, I learned some shit and I enjoyed it.

In summary, nested within my central purpose of describing the emergent themes of the experience of co-creating art with a partner has been a question about how learning occurred in the co-creation experience. The portraits offer a more accessible understanding of how learning was experienced by the artists during the co-creation. Each artist self-reported examples of newly developed knowledge and understanding, or shared information about how co-creation increased their knowledge and capacity for creating art with more awareness of themselves and their process. The learning experienced by the artists as described in the portraits can be best understood as the theme of learning in partnership.

Theme Summary

The above section has described the initial exploration of the artists' experience of co-creating art through the emergent themes of the experience as they were analyzed through these portraits. Throughout the study, while the artists co-created art, I employed my purpose by guiding research questions in multiple interviews to understand their experiences during the

different phases of the project. As I learned more and more about the artists' experiences creating art in their duos, I initially recorded observations and interview data for the categories of phenomenological analysis. But eventually, I began to develop these data into more substantial, descriptive portraits using the more focused phenomenology of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) rendered from the five modes of analysis (p. 214). From these expressive accounts of each artist's self-reported experience, I could use the tenets of portraiture to draw out the emergent themes of their experience of co-creation. I knew they were able to access their experiences well and reflect on them with ease for this study, because I was able to hear the emotion of each participant as they shared successes, challenges, frustrations, and engagement. Even my own assumptions about the lack of proximity being a barrier to my full observation, or of the full contribution of participants, were challenged throughout. Surprisingly, the requisite and necessary limiting of the boundaries of the study, as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, may in some instances have served to concentrate the work and artists' experience.

The curation of the artist portraits presented in the previous section has become more than a compilation of interview quotes, explanations, and emergent themes to present in this chapter. These six emergent themes, and the meanings connected to them in this chapter, are robust enough to contain and represent both the specific and distinctive, while also reflecting the nuances and commonalities of the experience. The modes of portraiture analysis have also brought to the surface the emerging theme of the experience of artistic co-creation in a synthesized way. It is these themes of the whole, real, felt sense of the co-creation experience that make it possible to offer a lived sense of what these artists describe. The next sections on Group Sensemaking and Individual Sensemaking comprise the member-checking conversation I had with the artists one year after the study's conclusion. In the course of that conversation, the

artists also organically spoke about the distinctions they made between co-creation and collaborative artmaking. That conversation is represented in the section, Participant Descriptions of Collaboration as Compared to Co-Creation.

Group Sensemaking

In speaking with several of the participants that cut across the duos, they said that the themes made them consider the needs of the artist. Why do artists create art? When creating art together, artists are using different modes altogether. Words just don't do it; it is more spiritual. The artists noticed that when they would go off to ideate alone, they would come back with images similar to those of their partner, and they were curious about why this was. In discussing the complexity of the experience, the artists noted that it was difficult to digest the dynamics as a whole because the experience hit very close to home, and that it is very protected, something to hold close. The participants also noted that they were only able to recognize the value of their experience in its complexity much later than was able to be expressed at the time of the exit interviews. The experience made them value the privilege of being in the same space together, something the pandemic made impossible during this study. While they all indicated that they had finished their co-created pieces during the exit interviews, during these interviews, the artists pondered whether a work could be finished in this partnered setting.

Individual Sensemaking

In looking to the complexity of their experiences, many of the artists described the experience of working together on a one-on-one basis in addition to the group discussion. In these individual discussions, the participants described working toward a common artistic goal with their partner during the study.

> Through co-creating, I felt less alone, and had experiences of bonding. I felt a sense of heightened morale, the experience was very validating. Creatively and artistically

expansive- there was an expansion of ideas, possibilities. Everyone's needs are met, shepherding, we are taking care of the other. This experience offered a creative boost. A desire to work with others in the future was a benefit. The experience was symbiotic, spiritual, like reading each other's minds. At the start, I was expecting something good to happen, like Anthony. During the process, there was lots of second guessing, back and forth, not linear. To say that relationship is at the heart of my experience is too broad, it is more like communication. (Lily)

I was learning by becoming aware that I was generating new knowledge through my partnership. Like seeing differently, I was doing something differently during the co-creation and continue to do so. The experience was positive/beneficial. I am open to more collaboration because of this like never before. I am not pleased with the end. We spent so much time on process and concept building that when executing, the images sit next to one another rather than unite. The process was spiritual, as the connection was odd, we were finishing each other sentences. We would both bring images of the same things unprompted. I could visualize Lily in here place creating. I felt very tuned in, like a heightened frequency between us. The complexity of all these is really the connection, like the third hand reference. (Dana)

I had an expectation, and I didn't want to waste my time, the relationship was important. What's in it for me? I want to know that the other person has to create art, it's not an option for them, a need not a preference. Having different initial goals are fine as long are there are similar, deeper goals. As a result of this experience, I want to be involved in more collaborations. Communication is key and rests beneath Relationship and Connection. You have to rely on one another, and the success of the partnership might rely on the quality of the relationship. Especially this year during Covid. (Anthony)

Underlying the essences are the emotional aspects of it. Making art like this improves communication as we share more. It begins as a participatory process but ends up revealing one's identity through the art creation. Working with Anthony felt spiritual. The concept building stage brought in the elements, but the components of the finished piece had a special connection that Anthony was not aware of. Receiving the finished piece made me very emotional. (Nathaniel)

Relationship and connection is most resonant to me, but all essences are integral to my practice. Learning in partnership my favorite. Learning in partnership to me means an always fluid process where you unearth things when working with others through discourse, especially when you disagree. You come to these crossroads. My work is political so issues around ethics and morals come up when I collaborate with others. We need to come to a mutual understanding, which isn't always possible. Through this process I was learning. By this I mean, if you spend enough time with someone, you absorb from them. I learn from person to person, it's a great way to learn things which shows up in my speech and my practice. I always to try apply these things that I've learned to keep those things circulating. What I've notice about Chris since this experience is that he's opened up, and for him to see himself in it isn't as easy as it seems. What I learned from working with Chris during this experience is being malleable, to

create a safe space for someone to come in and want to do this kind of work with me. That power dynamic is important. (Keyon)

Participant Descriptions of Collaboration and Co-Creation

After I reviewed the literature concerning collaborative art, I returned to the participants of the study to ask whether they thought they had collaborated or co-created during the study. I also asked them how they were defining both of these terms. The examples below provide the feedback each participant offered as I interviewed them both individually and in groups comprised of members of the three duos. During the discussion with my committee, and in my review of Dr. Jochum's suggested literature readings, there seemed to be strong debate and disagreement about what distinguishes the two terms, and I sought to understand how the artists themselves described these distinctions.

- Dana: We did co-creation.
    - **Collaboration** feels like push and pull, more manual. Would have seen it in the results. Lots of different skillsets. Playing Jazz together is collaboration. Noticed that Nathaniel and Anthony collaborate all the time as educators that work together on non-art tasks regularly.
    - **Co-Creation** – More about the journey, the process. We weren't together when we made the art. Semantics are important here. Equal parts, no leader. Two people writing music is co-creation.
- Lily: What we did was not collaboration. There are distinct differences. When considering whether to collaborate or co-create, one must ask what the criterion are, then figure out the logistics.
    - **Collaboration** – The outcome of separate ideas, there are other parameters at play. Seeking to involve the public, for instance some very famous artists hire villages to work on a piece for them who do not have any influence on the end result. These famous artists claim the work as their own in the end. The idea is already there, the getting together is to fulfill the idea beyond your involvement.
    - **Co-Creation** – Both have a single idea for a piece. It is on the individual, personal level. Novelty is involved. Equal footing. The unknown. Emergent. Cannot fall back to normal mode of individual creation.

- Anthony: In our co-creation, we collaborated, agreed on the parts, and we individually worked on them.
    - **Collaboration** – Unless you co-create, collaboration doesn't exist.
    - **Co-Creation** – The parts or the puzzle pieces are the co-creation.
- Nathaniel: I didn't know we were doing co-creation until we spoke about it together today. The whole time I thought we were collaborating. There is no distinction between the two. The purpose of art is to connect, we have a primal need to communicate – the artist and the art viewer. The co- is implied.\
    - **Collaboration** – Without collaboration there is no art. Even when you create art alone you are collaborating with yourself.
    - **Co-Creation** – No distinction.
- Keyon: What we did was co-creation as we used our skills equally.
    - **Collaboration** - I collaborate a lot and I don't have all the skills that's I need, so I need to find other artists. Not trying to talk, nothing about the context. More tactical. Can be a multitude of things. Does not exclude mutual creating but for it to be co-creation those equal norms need to be negotiated all the way through. Including the financial gain, initial investment of materials. Do things need to be in writing? Do we need a contract? I need to protect myself in the collaborative process. If you don't have a good experience maybe you won't do it again. If we would have collaborated it would have looked like me getting him to flesh out my vision and not trying to find that mutual agreement. When I create work, sometimes I create for myself so I'm not always collaborating with the viewer, but often the is at the forefront when I think about what I will create.
    - **Co-creation** - We contributed equally, sent things back and forth. We were deliberately trying to create a whole, unified piece to create one thing. Our individual efforts are representative of the whole thing.
    - **Individuals plight/striving to be a whole**. Individuals putting themselves away for the whole. We are part of something bigger. We/us - art isn't created in a vacuum. Creative processes vary but when artists draw from nature it is a collaborative process.
    - **Collaborating** - a whole lot more confident now when it comes to collaborating.
    - **Co-Creating**. When I create work sometimes I create for myself so not always collaboration with the viewer but at the forefront.

- Chris: Okay. At this particular stage, yes I was co-creating. We both, I believe, put in equal effort with ideas as well as execution.
    - **Co-creation** seems to me a much more rigid definition about materializing ideas.
    - **Collaboration** to me, is vast and can consist of either pitching ideas, executing ideas, opinions, inspiring, etc.

After reviewing my conversation with participants of the study, I determined that the artists also had intensive debates and strong opinions on distinctions between collaboration and co-creation. I particularly find the 'trigger' associated with discussing the two terms very interesting. While precise answers to questions may be beyond the scope of this study, many of the artists spoke of collaboration as a broader, more encompassing framework for non-individual artmaking and defined co-creation as one form of collaboration. In distinguishing co-creation from collaboration, however, many of the artists specifically described a greater sense of equity in co-creation in comparison to collaboration via phrases such as "equal footing," "no leader," and "equal effort." Based on the literature offered in the next chapter, my conversations with the artists, and my conversations with my committee, I define co-creation as a form of collaboration in which artists have equal autonomy over the creation of a piece of art.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of co-creation as a living phenomenon. In this section, I revisit the questions I posed in this study about how artists experience artistic co-creation, and whether or not and how they learn in the process.

- RQ1: What do artists experience who voluntarily engage in an experimental, virtual process of co-creating art?
- RQ2: How, if at all, does co-creating art provide the opportunity for learning?

- RQ2a: What are the components in co-creation that allow for learning to occur, if at all?
- RQ2b: What is the quality of that learning?

In the next section, I discuss these guiding research questions.

Experiences

What do artists experience who voluntarily engage in an experimental, virtual process of co-creating art? This chapter presented a descriptive synthesis reflecting and revealing the emergent themes of the artists' experiences of co-creating art. The six themes of the descriptive synthesis reflect the artists' experiences as they progressed through the co-creation process. Artists described themes that reflect moments of relationship and connection in the process of co-creation, the context and structure of the experiment, seeing experiences differently in the process of co-creation, finding agreements between the perspectives of the co-creators, developing creative rhythms based on temporal parameters, and learning in the partnership of the project.

Learning

How, if at all, does co-creating art provide an opportunity for learning? According to the participants, learning did not denote reciprocated or interconnected learning between participants but instead presented an experience of learning that occurred in the process of co-creating art. Each of the artists self-reported descriptions of opportunities for learning resulting from having access to a complementary mindset from their co-creation partner.

What are the components in co-creation that allow for learning to occur, if at all? Ind and Coates (2013) explained how co-creation, or the idea of creating, was about interpretation and meaning making. Throughout this study, artists learned via co-creation to "construe ... new or …

revised interpretation[s] of the meaning[s] of [their] experience[s] in order to guide future action" through the process of co-creation (Mezirow, 1991, p. 12). These shared experiences were related to both personal and professional activities. Artists were able to interpret the needs of their co-creation partner and provided encouragement when they sensed a need for support in their partner. Self-reported learning also occurred from the experiences of self-discovery or learning about oneself. Throughout the co-creation process, many artists inferred or noted how the process of co-creating was helping them learn more about themselves as an artist.

What is the quality of that learning? Anthony noted, "The success of the partnership might rely on the quality of the relationship." Reflecting on the ideas of Ind and Coates (2013), who shared that co-creating is a "force for participation and democratization … rather than simply an alternative research technique or a way of creating value through co-opting the skills and creativity of individuals" (p. 92), each artist offered examples of newly developed knowledge and understanding or shared information about how co-creation increased their knowledge and capacity for creating art with more awareness of themselves and their process.

Special Consideration: Co-Creation Can Assist with Coping during a Pandemic

Researcher's Note on COVID-19

This study began on April 1, 2020—essentially the start of lockdown in Bermuda. Because of this, I lost my research funding, and my entire research protocol had to be amended to accommodate the stay-at-home order, social distancing, proximity barriers, and store closures. While the themes and conclusions of this study do not directly reference COVID-19, as it did not influence the study to the degree in which I initially thought, I thought it would be prudent to describe briefly how the pandemic affected the participant experience, so as not to undermine or minimize the impact it had on my participants as human collaborators.

In this study, participants self-reported the effects of COVID-19 in the form of depression and isolation. As some participants were educators, restricted access to art studios and offices created challenges to the normal availability of supplies. It was reported that the partnered nature of this study helped participants to cope and made the COVID-19 event more bearable. They also noted that these unique circumstances created new opportunities for learning to navigate obstacles, such as differences in technology and connectivity, which presented a learning curve for some participants. Lastly, due to the national restriction in Bermuda dictating how far one could venture from their primary residence, the literal distance in proximity and the limitation of physical presence led to a feeling of disconnection from their partner. In this study, each duo determined their own scheduling, pacing, responsibilities, and means of communicating. However, despite the freedom in structure, this legal boundary made collaboration a qualitatively different experience. Through trial and error, the artists reported finding a means of collaboration that worked best for their individual partnerships, allowing them to adjust their methods of creation. The lockdown in Bermuda was fortunately short in duration compared with other jurisdictions, so the impact to the study was also limited. These restrictions were too late, however, in one case, where a loss was experienced that weighed heavily on this participant and their partner. Both participants noted that participation in this study helped this individual cope with their grief and loss.

Chapter 5: Reflections on Themes and Final Recommendations

Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things:-
We murder to dissect.

Enough of science and of art;
Close up these barren leaves.
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.
—William Wordsworth, The Thorn, 1798

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of co-creation as a living phenomenon. Based on an anecdotal observation that virtually all the historically significant canvas-based art I had experienced in museum settings was signed by one master artist, I set out to study co-creation in art. While phenomenology asks the researcher to offer a singular, unified essence of the participant experiences, it was not in the best interest of understanding the phenomenon in this case. Instead, an investigation into the dynamics of the emergent themes within the interviews with the participants would help me understand the ways the participants viewed my interpretations and syntheses and whether or not their own views differed or coincided with them. For instance, a painting is more than the unprimed canvas, the hues of each individual color, the use of negative space, and the texture. It is the complexity of how these individual components interact that offers form.

Chapter 4 presented six themes and a descriptive synthesis of the co-creation experience of six professional artists. These themes were: relationship and connection, context and structure,

seeing differently, finding agreement, developing creative rhythms, and learning in partnership. In this chapter, I revisit these themes in the context of literature on collaborative artmaking and co-creation that augments the themes identified in Chapter 4. As I learned from my initial literature review in Chapter 2, much has been said about collaborative art, but less has been said about what artists experience when co-creating art. In distinguishing co-creation from collaborative art, I will refer back not only to the conceptual framework of Warhol-Basquiat, who worked together on a single canvas and both signed or considered signing it, but to the Ind and Coates (2013) description of co-creation as a "force for participation and democratization" (p. 92).

Questions

Many questions exist surrounding the practice of collaborative art. Kester (2011) examined collaborative art practices in a global context. He offered explanations for the questions that are often presented when contemplating the benefits and challenges of collaborative art. Kester (2011) shared:

> The proliferation of collaborative and participatory work suggests certain transformations in the nature of contemporary art practice that have broader implications for art historiography. First, contemporary collaborative art practices complicate conventional notions of aesthetic autonomy. This raises an important set of ontological questions. What constitutes "art" at this historical moment, and what are its constituent or defining conditions? A second set of questions concern the epistemological status of this work. What forms of knowledge do collaborative, participatory, and socially engaged practices generate? Finally, collaborative practices have important hermeneutic implications. While many projects that I examine include a physical component, the artists involved also identify various dialogical processes as integral to the content of the work. This suggests a model of reception, and a set of research methodologies, that are potentially quite different from those employed to analyze object-based art practices. The extemporaneous and participatory nature of these projects requires the historian or critic to employ techniques (field research, participant- observation, interviews, etc.) more typically associated with the social sciences. (pp. 9-10)

Other questions that are relevant to collaborative art are focused on the practice. Crawford (2008) highlighted that an analysis and understanding of collaborative art practices are essential:

> Some of the questions are: What is the practice? Has it changed? If so, how has it changed? For instance, is the process the same, but the subject different? Or are both very different? Is a collaborative practice enough to make the work art if you're a group of artists with an interesting and mysterious name? And what is collaboration in art and who and how is it practiced? Can a group make an artistic decision? How much do the individuals really merge? And are these really the correct question? Does this approach help us understand the art? Do they need to merge or drop their egos to collaborate? Can they? The "I" is always there. (p. ix)

Other questions and observations on questioning the practice of collaborative art may include:

- Given a decision to collaborate, how do artists actually go about collaborating? (Crawford, 2008, p. xii)

- How was I inspired? Where did I get an idea? These are often questions I don't want to answer, partly because the process is so intimate, so private, and partly because the answer may not be entirely clear, even to me. Where does creativity come from—one person or many? When several people collaborate, ideas emerge from individuals, but are modified by interactions within the group. But exactly how do two or more people work out precisely what idea they will execute, and who will do what? (Crawford, 2008, p. xii)

- But students of creative partnerships have not yet provided a theoretical framework to account for the significance of emotion in partnership. The challenge of effectively integrating intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional aspects of creativity is of increasing concern to many scholars, including those working within the cultural-historical, or Vygotskian, framework. (John-Steiner, 2007, p. 76)

Literature on Co-Creation

This dissertation deviated from the established structure of Moustakas (1994) by offering a literature review in Chapter 2 that framed and oriented the inquiry toward the phenomenon at hand, as guided by Fry et al. (2017). At the conclusion of research, I returned to the literature a second time to explore where and how the findings of the study are amplified, reflected, or elaborated on by newly relevant literature, philosophy, empirical research, poetry, art, or related stories of practice. The purpose of the literature presented in this chapter is to illustrate, as much as possible, how the findings of this study are reflected in other contexts in order to raise further questions about the relationship between co-creation and representation.

In this literature review, I examine co-creation in the context of the artwork of two duos of artists: Josef and Anni Albers, and Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner. As with the Basquiat/Warhol collaboration, I raise the possibility that, as a consequence of the limited representation of minority voices, these women were only ever culturally conceptualized as the partners of very famous men. Feminist art historians have, after all, observed that Anni Albers was personally "angered that, publicly, she was often seen as the wife of her famous husband, rather than an artist in her own right" (Otto, 2019, p. 57), and that Lee Krasner was similarly overshadowed by Jackson Pollock because of "the obdurate sexism of the art establishment" (Gilbert, 2019, para. 3).

The first set I would like to discuss here is Josef and Anni Albers. According to the Albers Foundation (2006), Josef Albers, who at one time was referred to by art critics and educators as a heretic, is now considered one of the most influential artist-educators of the 20th century. To explain how he produced the contents of his now-famous book, *Interaction of Color*, Albers (2006) suggested that the book was a result of *search* rather than *research.* For Albers, the creation of art was not about the *what*; instead, he asked us to consider the *how*. His book was an effort to challenge the classical notions of *how* knowledge was created as espoused by Western, positivist academia. Albers did not believe education was about collecting 'so-called' facts to generate 'so-called' knowledge, but to develop a vision, or a way of seeing, through the process of experience, discovery, and invention. To Albers, *this* was creativity—not looking backward at historical theory to inform the present, but joining with others and experimenting with emergent tools and methods to create something *new*. In this way, Albers argued that theory should follow practice, not the other way around. Unsurprisingly, this pedagogical stance made Albers quite unpopular within the 1950s higher education community, according to the Albers

Foundation (2006). However, this novel way of approaching his practice and pedagogy propelled Albers to become the first living artist to be given a solo retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, some 20 years later (Geldzahler, 1971).

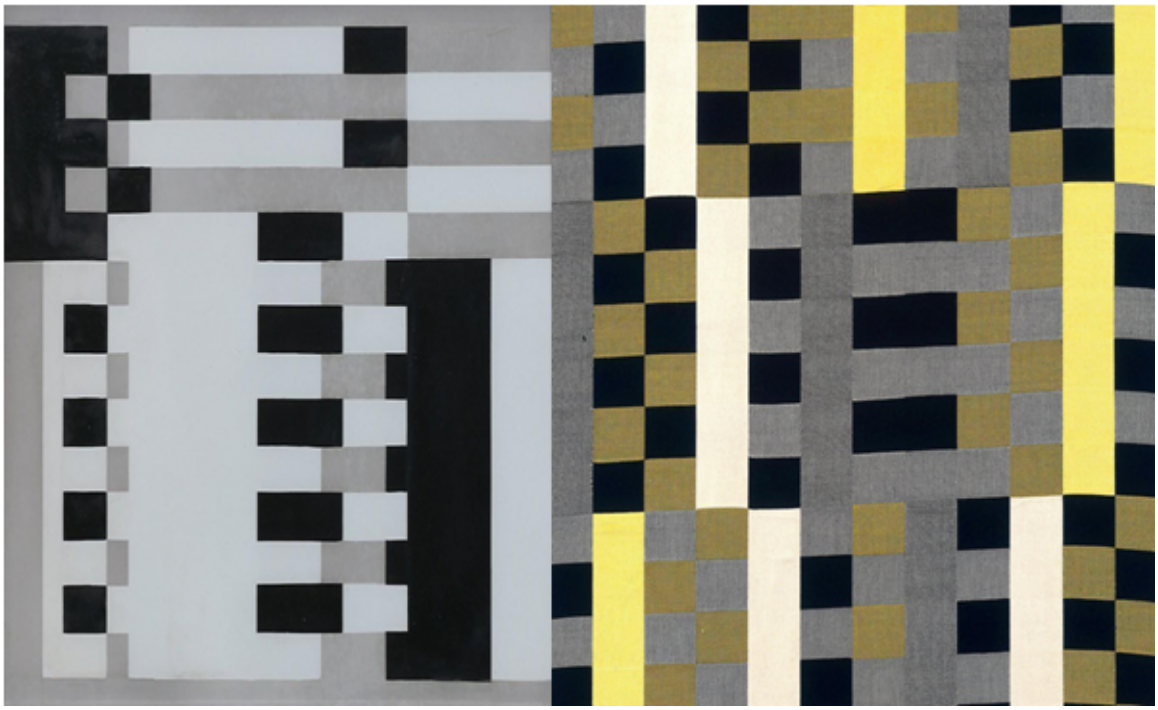
It is precisely this tension between the *Arts* and *Academia* that brought me to this phenomenological study, or *search*. Packed into the preceding paragraph are references to deeply embedded norms within Western artistic and academic pedagogies that privilege certain ways of creating knowledge and art over others (Lawrence, 2005). For Albers (2006), the study and creation of art *should be* a collaborative endeavor, predicated on the development and growth of one's artistic sight or vision. Josef Albers's pedagogy did not hew to the classical notions of regurgitating the theoretical ideas of others studied in isolation. As a byproduct of, and eventually a professor in, the collective-based Bauhaus art school in early 1900s Germany, Albers did not subscribe to pedagogies that rewarded individual, theory-led art production. However, it seems to me that today he is regarded as an *individual* master. There are two main assumptions embedded in Albers's pedagogy that I would like to pull out and bring to attention. First, Albers believed that art was a developmental process based on practical experience. Second, he proposed that art is best made and understood in collective modalities through trial and error.

Josef and Anni Albers

What is not often discussed in conversations related to Josef Albers is that he was married to an arguably equally talented artist, Anni Albers, for over 50 years. According to the Albers Foundation, Anni was also a product of the Bauhaus movement in Germany, along with Josef, and her innovative, abstract weaving techniques are still regularly displayed at the most important art institutions in the world. According to the Albers Foundation, with whom I spoke over email whilst researching for this study, the couple never co-created a piece of art. However, their

relationship was said to be an incubator for nourishing each other's creativity (see Figure 6). The Albers Foundation also noted that the two had a profound conviction that art was central to human existence. It was suggested that, if the two artists did, in fact, co-create, it was likely to be in "stealth." In any event, in viewing the body of their work myself, for the untrained eye there appear to be numerous aesthetic overlaps. Though these perceived overlaps are said not to result from co-creation, based on the images below, I would argue that further inquiry is worthwhile.

Figure 6. *Interlocked; Black White Yellow*



Note. Left – from *Interlocked,* by Josef Albers (1927). The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Albers, A. (1926). Right – from *Black White Yellow,* by Anni Albers (1926). The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/DACS, London.

Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner

Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, both abstract expressionist painters, were married for 12 years. It is well documented (Engelmann, 2007) that Krasner greatly influenced Pollock's

development of his signature style, which is credited for his establishment as one of the most important artists of the 20th century. While she struggled to establish herself as an artist in her own right while Pollock was alive, Krasner has since commanded our attention and gained significant importance (Narine, 2019). From the images below (see Figure 7), I would argue that the works are stylistically similar. However, as Krasner's piece was released seven years after the death of Pollock, any co-creation seems unlikely, but I am still curious about how she was able to master Pollock's intricate drip technique. Like the work of Josef and Anni Albers, the similarities of the pieces are striking to me, but there is no mention in the literature of Pollock and Krasner co-creating.

Figure 7. *Through Blue; Number 27, 1950*

Note: Left - from "*Through Blue,"* by Lee Krasner (1963). The Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Right – from "*Number 27, 1950,"* by Jackson Pollock (1950). The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Learning With and Through Art

The second dimension of literature that might add context to the topic of co-creation is the function of art in the learning process. While there are several theorists that discuss learning from experience, Dewey specifically evaluates the relationship between learning and art-making most relevant to my inquiry. Though Dewey's writings about art and learning are extensive, his work opens the door to ambiguity about how co-creation might involve learning in partnered contexts versus on an individual basis.

In a series of lectures, now consolidated into a book known as *Art as Experience*, John Dewey (1959) was the first philosopher in Western education to suggest that art's relevance to learning and experience should be considered beyond its place on the canvas. Dewey, a pragmatist, suggested drawing on the richness of art to understand one's experience. As such, pragmatist philosophy places everyday experience at the center of its inquiry. It is primarily concerned with human action, and the practicality and materiality of human engagement with the world (Coyne, 1995). Dewey, like Josef Albers, argued that experience and aesthetics serve as a paradigm for *all* experience. According to Dewey, art is useful because it allows us to reflect upon our experience of the world.

When Dewey described the interaction between art and individuals, he suggested that it is not simply a case of reciprocal action, but rather a relational process through which identities are formed. It is this interaction, he argued, that allows humans to make meaning. He argued that we are constantly "doing and undoing" (p. 14) as we make sense of the world. Dewey suggested that these moments of temporary disharmony, where there is a 'falling out of step' between an individual and their environment, offer us an opportunity to reflect.

To be certain, Dewey (1959) is more generally referring to the relationship between artists and moments of temporary disharmony in their artmaking environments, rather than the kind of temporary disharmony *between one another* that the participants in this study self-reported as instances of learning. But Dewey also does not merely replicate the myth of the isolated western artistic genius. He writes that while art "is produced and is enjoyed by individuals, those individuals are what they are in the content of their experience because of the cultures in which they participate" (p. 326). Nathaniel, of course, described this relationship in terms of a triangulation between art and art object, and art object and culture, saying, "The purpose of art is to connect, we have a primal need to communicate—the artist and the art viewer." In this sense, the artist is not simply creating art in a microsystemic vacuum, to use Bronfrenbrenner's (1979) language, but operating in the context of multiple systems that influence and are influenced by the art object.

More pragmatically, however, in examining the environment, practical instances of learning emerged in the cultural context of the COVID-19 crisis. While all relational learning was self-reported, Dewey (1959) has certainly acknowledged the ways in which technology influences artistic form in other sections of his work, writing that,

> The relativity of technique to instruments is often overlooked. It becomes important when the new instrument is a sign of a change in a culture—that is, in material to be expressed. Early pottery is largely determined by the potters' wheel. Rugs and blankets owe much of their geometric design to the nature of the instrument of weaving. (p. 148).

In this sense, learning resulted in the context of co-creation as defined by the circumstances of a global pandemic that required social distancing between artist participants. I necessarily amended the experiment and abandoned my original container, requiring the artists to exchange art online. While I was out of step with my research environment, Keyon, who had never owned a computer, was also immediately "out of step" with his own environment (p. 14).

Figure 8. *Andy and Jean Michel Painting Problems at Andy's Studio at 860 Broadway, March 27, 1984*

Expanding Beyond One's Individual Approach

Because the participants in this research were self-described solo artists experimenting with co-creation, this study expanded on their existing modes of creative expression. This understanding of co-creation had not been articulated in this way before, at least to my knowledge, so I wanted to understand more about the existing modes of individual creation with which artists entered this study. Although considering my question from a different context, R.G. Collingwood (as cited in Sawyer, 2000), a philosopher known for his seminal work, *Principles of Art*, suggested that the notion of individual creation is an inherently flawed concept. From a social lens, he suggested that:

> The painter did not invent the idea of painting pictures or the pigments and brushes with which he paints them.... [Artists] become poets or painters or musicians ... by living

> in a society where these languages are current ... all artists have modeled their style upon that of others, used subjects that others have used, and treated them as others have treated them already. A work of art so constructed is a work of collaboration. (pp. 156-157)

Similarly, Keith Sawyer (2000), who has dedicated his academic career to the study of creativity and learning, cites Vygotsky, Dewey, and Collingwood to suggest that "the individual artist or scientist always works with an internal mental model of their field … [and] artists who do not internalize such a model are not likely to generate products judged to be creative" (p. 159).

What these scholars and philosophers say here is that, regardless of the perception of an artist's desire for an individual approach to creative expression, they are invariably always collaborating. However, Holly Black (2017), a conservator, gallerist, and expert cataloguer who works in collaboration with the global auction house, Christie's, suggested that an artist's desire for individual expression can be dated back at least to the Renaissance period and is related to attribution. She said that:

> artist signatures first became prevalent during the early Renaissance period, which saw art production shift from co-operative guild systems to a celebration of individual creativity. A signature was [a] way to differentiate your talent from that of lesser peers. (p. 1)

While artistic 'ages' or 'periods' come into vogue, and then are invariably replaced by evolving aesthetics and methods, this specific remnant of the Renaissance period and its belief systems still is practiced and considered authoritative today.

As the participants in this study describe, and from what I gleaned when I recruited artists to participate in this study, co-creation seems to have a stigma as compared to individual creation. Born from a desire to protect one's intellectual property, what seems to have developed over the last 500 years, and was also described by the artists in this study, is a norm of celebrating and preserving the artistic practice of individual endeavor. For instance, the art market (i.e., true collectors [including museums], investment capitalists, art educators, and art

producers themselves) today values and sells known pieces of collaboration for fractions of what solo pieces from the same artists sell for. At recent auctions, deceased artist Jean-Michel Basquiat's piece *Untitled* (1982) sold for $110.5 million, whereas his beloved and highly valued collaborative piece with (also deceased) Andy Warhol, *Sweet Pungent* (1984-85), sold for a mere £5.7 million. Also recall from Chapter 2 that when Warhol and Basquiat's collaborative show was panned by critics—likely due to racism against Basquiat—it brought them both such despair that it ruined their relationship.

Figure 9. *Sweet Pungent; Untitled*

Note: Left—from "*Sweet Pungent,"* by Warhol & Basquiat (1985a). Galerie Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich. Right—from "*Unentitled,"* by Basquiat (1982). Owner: Yusaku Maezawa.

Elsewhere in the literature, Kester (2000) suggests that collaboration is risky, as:

> it can, potentially, work against the grain of the image of the heroic artist struggling to assert his or her mastery over a recalcitrant nature, and evoke instead a form of art practice defined by open-ness, listening and intersubjective vulnerability. (as cited in Barbour et al., 2007, p. 52)

Additionally, Barbour et al. (2007) noted that artists are reluctant to engage in collaboration due to a desire to remain "whole," and the acknowledgement of an outside influence on their art product diminishes its significance. The authors suggest that "however romantic, this image of the artist [as independent actor] does not acknowledge the dialogues and exchanges (even those of rebellion) that inevitably occur between artists and their communities as art is created" (p. 51).

In this study, however, where artistic co-creation expands existing modes of creative expression, as a formula it could be represented as: 1+1=3. Where the sum of the parts (co-created whole) is greater than the parts (individual wholes), a third whole emerges in which the individual wholes are nested. The artists in this study describe the experience of being participants in something they would consider more than just two individual parallels or interacting contributions. This notion of 1+1=3 is similar to the findings of Lovin (1999), who studied learning partnerships by focusing on Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). She found that, although the best EMTs working in duos recognize that:

> "two heads are better than one" ... in many instances in this setting, the potential for synergistic partnership is never realized. [Which] has significant implications for the efficient operation of emergency health care services and for effective patient care. (p. 30)

She went on to imply that, especially in the field of healthcare, where lives are at stake, "the dynamics of workplace partnerships are so critical to the effectiveness of emergency medical care that it appears this issue should not be left to chance" (p. 31).

It is my hope that the findings of this study have the potential to advance the mindset about the value of co-created art—not only because it does not pose a threat to the wholeness of the individual artists or the artifact, but because co-creation has the added potential of conceiving and giving birth to a new whole that preserves the individuals in their wholeness.

Literature Summary

You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less *gone*?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.
—Edgar Allan Poe, 1849

This section is offered to further illustrate how the complexity of the experience was understood by the participants of this study and reflected in other contexts of related inquiry in the literature. These included collaborative artmaking, an exploration of the individualistic approach to artistic creation, applied theater as analogous contexts for co-creation, and a description of process painting. Many of the experiences in the literature of co-creation offered in this section are presented as phenomena related to the phenomenon this dissertation sought to describe. As such, they also can be seen to share similar or overlapping themes and interrelated outcomes to the findings of this dissertation document.

Co-Creation in Applied Theater

While there is a dearth of literature related to the type of artistic co-creation that was conducted in this study, there are instances where collaboration has been studied in other artistic mediums. For instance, Keith Sawyer (2000) has dedicated his career to the study of creativity and learning, and his research focuses on improvisation in group performance, including studies of jazz ensembles and Chicago improvisation theater groups. Sawyer suggested that the lack of research related to artistic co-creation may be because collaborative performance art is the dominant art of our time.

One version of collaborative performance art used in many diverse educational settings is Applied Theater. Applied Theater has been widely used to facilitate learning in rural communities to help individuals take the perspective of the other, or to stand in someone else's shoes. The technique was brought into mainstream pedagogy by Augusto Boal in the 1970s, who was greatly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (Lewis, 2014).

To begin to understand the learning that transpires in collaborative performance art, Augusto Boal's (1995) notion of the "metaxis" is helpful to consider. Metaxis can be defined as the experience of belonging to two worlds simultaneously—the real, physical world and an alternative and fictive reality created by being able to see oneself as both character and actor.

Vettraino et al. (2017) studied the experience of metaxis in a group of Indigenous subjects, ranging from 12 to 16 years of age, by performing theater action research (TAR) in order to increase self-awareness. They invited participants to play theater games and engage in Image Theatre (Boal, 1995), where stories were told through frozen 'photographs' using bodies in relationship to one another. After participating in TAR, participants reported increased levels of motivation, a sense of self-efficacy and achievement, an enhanced ability to cope with diversity, uncertainty, and change, as well as an enhancement of social skills and emotional development (Vettraino et al., 2017). Similarly, the participants in this dissertation study recounted their own enhanced ability to cope with diversity and uncertainty as it pertained both to their partner artist and their unfamiliarity with the task.

Additionally, Vettraino et al. (2017) noted that in the co-creation of experience and sharing during theater engagement, subjects were able to explore felt or embodied ways of knowing, as they were physically enacting and taking perspective on their own and each other's experiences. The researchers concluded their argument by suggesting that it is possible for

someone to be both creator and audience of their own reflexive process. Vettraino et al. also brought into focus the importance of intersubjective meaning making and suggested that it is especially profound in art that is co-created, as evidenced through their research in applied theater. The findings of this dissertation study revealed a similar importance of intersubjective meaning making and learning as a result of co-creation.

In another example of applied theater, Barbour et al. (2007) explored the nature of collaboration across or between artistic mediums, and across or between cultures. Working with performance artists and educators that were predominantly Mäori and Pakeha, their desire was to explore the collaborative creative process, not only for the resulting art products, but also to gain a more thorough understanding of collaboration itself. The researchers in this study noted that much of the literature on artistic collaboration they had reviewed involved the independent creation of elements for a performance in response to a director's vision, such as choreography, visual design, sculpture, or sound composition. For their study, collaboration relied on the interconnectivity and synthesis of the participants to create the experience for themselves during the duration of the study. The findings from Barbour et al. suggested that participants were able to develop deep relationships with one another by reflecting on their experience, develop new understandings of their co-creators, increase their sense of self-worth, and gain a greater appreciation for the diversity and shared agendas of their collaborators. The authors noted that the collaboration participants experienced in their study provided a context through which their participants were able to contribute to "personal transformation and to re-imagine their world" (p. 71). Likewise, the artists who participated in this dissertation study described their experiences of developing relationships and connections in the close bonds that were formed in their duo relationships.

Process Painting as Co-Creation

While the artists in this study were focused on the co-creation of final art pieces, a practice known as "process painting" (Cassou & Cubley, 1995) involves learning through the process, rather than the outcome, of making art together. Process painting involves the use of two brushes, three students, and one canvas, and is utilized by participants as a method of unearthing holistic knowing, which encompasses the cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains:

> When you paint for process, you listen to the magic of the inner voices, you follow the basic human urge to experiment with the new, the unknown, the mysterious, the hidden.... To create is to ... awaken buried perceptions, to be alive and free without worrying about the result. (p. 5)

Professor Randee Lawrence (2005) suggested that process painting allows one to gain access to his or her inner reservoir of knowing, which often presents itself as intuition in the form of symbols and imagery. Lawrence suggested that the main purpose of this form of artistic creation is not to teach art, but rather to use art as a means to learn something else.

In recounting their experience of participating in process painting for the first time, Courtney-Smith and Angelotti (2005), two art educators, suggested that "sharing the works ... allowed for new insights and ideas that you never knew existed in your painting or poem" (p. 58). In a similar vein, author and artist Paul Carter (2005) offered the concept of "material thinking," which provides a methodological perspective for the use of collaborative creative practice research that acknowledges knowing through making. While the artists in this study were not painting for process, or participating with an intentional desire to learn anything from their experience, the themes and findings of this study describe how the process of artistic creation in this study expanded the artists' existing modes of creative expression.

Final Reflections

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of co-creation as a living phenomenon. Additionally, this study sought to elucidate what learning looked like, if it existed at all, in the face of pressure to pursue individual endeavors, and might be relevant to several fields and contexts.

The perspectives and experiences shared by the participants of this study led to a broadened understanding of the expressed phenomenon I set out to explore. The artists provided a glimpse into their individual and joint creative process, relationship formation, learning, and meaning making during co-creation.

In addition, the experiences shared by the participants in this study possibly shed some light regarding what was at stake for important artists such as Warhol and Basquiat when they undertook to co-create. It is my hope that readers of this study have a better sense of the importance of co-creation as an artistic practice and garner a greater appreciation for art created as a result of this method. Although the art world has yet to fully embrace the collaborative art of Basquiat and Warhol in the manner they had anticipated, it is this researcher's hope that this study invites stakeholders in the field of the arts to take a closer look. I believe that art created in partnered settings is worthwhile, even if institutional bodies do not yet do so.

In closing, the artists that participated in my pilot and dissertation studies were remarkably gracious with their time and generous with their engagement, and the manner in which all the duos interacted was special to witness. Despite the numerous setbacks that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I am extremely grateful that none of the participants grew ill or withdrew from the study. An artist's space, as I have come to learn, is an extremely precious domain in which to inquire. In rereading Warhol's journal entries about his special relationship

with Basquiat to write this summary, I have a fuller and deeper appreciation for just how generous these artists were to share their learnings and musings with us. While many of Warhol and Basquiat's partnered creations might still collect dust in the various galleries that own them, it would not be the first time that an innovation would go years before it could be understood and appreciated. In the meantime, it is my hope that future artistic milieux will venture beyond their partisan ways of creation, in favor of the aesthetic beauty that may lie in the intellectual confusion and uncertainty of co-creation.

Recommendations

> A primary function of art and thought is to liberate the individual from the tyranny of his culture in the environmental sense and to permit him to stand beyond it in an autonomy of perception and judgment. (Lionel Trilling, as cited in Hersch, 1991, p. 99)

The recommendations in this section of the chapter are organized into two categories: recommendations for professionals and recommendations for further research. In the recommendations for professionals section, I offer recommendations for professional artists who might be curious about creating art with another artist and want to learn more. I also provide recommendations for museum leaders and curators who are searching for a lens into the uncommon practice of artistic co-creation. Lastly, I offer recommendations to future researchers based on my experience with my study design, the findings and implications of the study, and information gleaned from the study that was not part of my inquiry but is worth further investigation.

Recommendations for Professionals

Professional Artists

The findings of this study describe how a small number of professional artists, who typically create art on an individual basis, experienced a more complex artistic experience. Although artists in this co-creation found agreements with one another as they let go of their

individual perspectives, they all described practical and personal learning as a result of their partnership.

Museum Leaders

The portraits in Chapter 4 of this study describe how the art products that resulted from this artistic co-creation were subjectively meaningful to the artists that made them. While each of the duos created a final art product, it is unclear at the time of this report whether these artifacts will be publicly displayed. It is also unclear at the time of this report how these artifacts might be received by institutional art bodies, should these artists decide to publicly display them. The findings of this study describe a rich resource of finding agreements and creative harmony, patiently waiting to be more thoroughly appreciated and understood. Museum directors might be persuaded to facilitate a similar type of artistic collaboration within their own organization, with local or in-residence artists. Art curators might offer a new or deepening appreciation for collaborative, visual art—an appreciation that might also lead to the more frequent inclusion of this discipline in exhibition settings.

Recommendations for Further Research

Adult Learning Theory

The secondary research questions of this study sought to explore learning that might be involved in artistic co-creation. As the findings describe, learning was present for the duos as a result of their experience, as were shifts in meaning-making. Future research might involve studying artistic co-creation through the lens of Experiential Learning and Transformative Learning. Future research into experiential learning, or learning through experimentation and reflection (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), might involve studying how the interaction of Kolb and Kolb's experiential learning cycle and artistic co-creation interact, if at all. One could study longitudinal

artistic co-creation and individual creation and offer Kolb and Kolb's assessment at various intervals to measure how individuals move around the learning cycle during artistic co-creation as compared to individual artistic creation. Transformative learning involves fundamentally changing the way we see ourselves through critical reflection on our experiences, where new action is the result (Mezirow, 1991). Future research involving a relationship between artistic co-creation and transformative learning might utilize King's (2009) Learning Activities Survey (LAS) to understand the extent to which co-creation might offer opportunities for transformative learning. Because King's work is most suitable for larger numbers of participants, future researchers could amend the design of this study for use in a classroom setting, and then, rather than interviewing participants during the study, future research might offer King's LAS after the co-creation to measure the extent to which transformative learning occurred, if at all.

Creative Rhythms

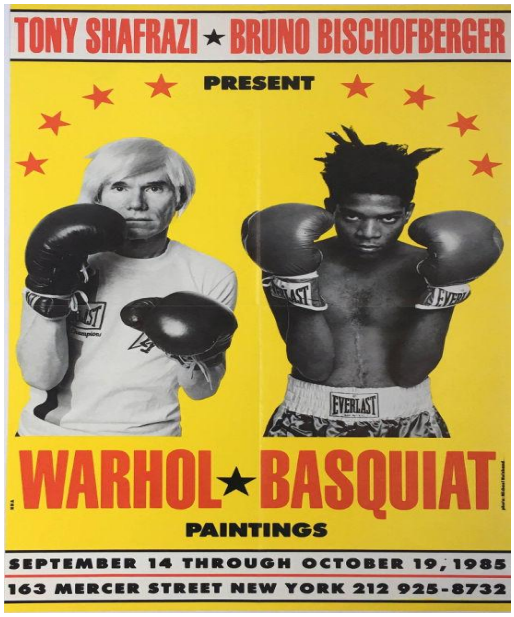
This study described how artists experienced developing creative rhythms and learning in partnership through co-creation. Further research could be conducted within the visual arts to find out more about how the dynamics of creative rhythms function in this type of partnered activity. Further research could also utilize Walker's (2010) criteria for social flow and apply these criteria in a deductive way to learn more about whether a relationship might exist between the components of social flow and the development of creative rhythms found in this study.

Collaboration

There are several ways in which the design of this study could be altered or expanded for future research. First, while this study included six artists who were of relative familiarity to one another, further research could be expanded to include individuals that are unknown to one another. Second, while this study was conducted with duos, increasing the number of artists that

participate in a co-creation may result in different themes. Third, the duos in this study came together to create one piece of art over five months, and then the partnership was dissolved. Further research might involve studying existing, organic artistic duos or collaborative artist groups to examine some of the dynamics speculated upon in this study to test for some of these dynamics. Fourth, while this study focused on professional artists, a further study on collaboration might include non-artists, including the corporate sector, with a similar study design to see how, and if at all, the findings change.

Figure 10. *Warhol Basquiat Boxing Poster*



Note: From "Warhol Basquiat Boxing Poster," by Warhol & Basquiat (1985). Warhol Basquiat Collaborations at Tony Shafrazi.

Figure 11. *Warhol and Basquiat Sitting*

Note: From "Warhol and Basquiat Sitting, 1987," by Tseng Kwong Chi (1987). Eric Firestone Gallery.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000

Protocol Title: The Experience of Learning While Making Art Together
Principal Investigator: Eric C. West, Teachers College, Columbia University, 441-591-3135, ecw2147@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in this research study called, "The Experience of Learning While Making Art Together." You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are a professional artist, a member of the Bermudian community, **and** are over 18 years old. Six individuals will participate in this study and it will take up to two months to complete. By participating in this study, you will be virtually paired with one other artist and create art on a single, shared canvas over the duration of the study. You will also be asked to participate in one-on-one interviews with the researcher before and after the experience as well as weekly while the pair are engaging in creating their art.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

This study is being done to explore how artists perceive, describe, and learn through their experience of co-creation. The theme that this study proposes to explore through co-creation is how artists are making sense of what has been happening during the current Coronavirus health crisis?

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the principal investigator, and take part in a collaborative art activity. During the one on one interviews you will be asked a series of questions that pertain to yourself and your experience before, during, and after the study.

The one on one interviews will be audio-recorded. After the audio-recording is written down (transcribed) the audio-recording will be deleted at the completion of the study. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate. The one on one interviews will take approximately thirty minutes during each interval, though they may take longer if your wish. Within the transcription, you will be given an alias, or false name, in order to keep your identity confidential. Additionally, you will be asked to voluntarily keep documentation of your conversations online with your co-creator while deciding on what to create, and other documentation of things that come up during co-creation such as photos of your work, models, sketches, iterations etc. These photos and audio recordings will be shared with the principal investigator. Lastly, the artwork created during the art activity will belong equally to each duo to do with as they wish.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Please note that **you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about.**

The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using an alias instead of your real name and keeping all information on a password protected computer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid as a participant of this study. Additionally, there are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study will officially end after two months or when you have completed the co-created piece of art and exit interview.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

The investigator will keep all written materials locked in a secure electronic drive. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio-recording will be written down and the audio-recording will then be destroyed at the completion of the study. There will be no record matching your real name with your alias.

For quality assurance, my dissertation chair, committee, and/or members of the Teachers College Office of Sponsored Programs may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law. All data obtained in this study will be kept for three years after the completion of the study.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of this study may be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. This study is being conducted as the dissertation of the principal investigator.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING

Audio and video recording are part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in this research study.

_____I give my consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

_____I **do not** consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

___I consent to allow written, and/or audio taped materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College

_____
Signature

___I **do not** consent to allow written, and/or audio taped materials viewed outside of Teachers College Columbia University

_____
Signature

OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes _____No_____
Initial Initial

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

Yes _____No_____
Initial Initial

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, **Eric C. West, at 441-591-3135 or at ecw2147@tc.columbia.edu.**

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- Your data will not be used in further research studies.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study

Print name: _____

Date: _____

Signature:

_____

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Letter to Participants

Name: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your interest in my dissertation research on how artists perceive and describe their experience of co-creating art. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study and I am excited about the possibility of your participation in it. The purpose of this letter is to determine if you are interested in joining this study, and to make time to discuss further if you have other questions. I also enclose a participation-consent form. You may wish to sign this and send it back to me, or if you have questions, to first request a time to talk before signing.

The research model I am using is a qualitative one, through which I am seeking comprehensive depictions or descriptions about how artists perceive, describe, and learn through their experience of co-creating art? In addition, the theme that this study proposes to explore through co-creation is how artists are making sense of what has been happening during the current Coronavirus health crisis.

As a participant you will be asked to create art with one other artist virtually over the course of a maximum of two months. This will involve the making of art through sharing one canvas but not being able to be physically present with each other in person at the same time. Additionally, you will be asked to recall specific episodes, situations, or events that you experienced in participating in the study during recorded, one on one interviews over video conference. I am seeking vivid, accurate, and comprehensive portrayals of what these experiences were like for you: your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as situations, events, places, and people connected with your experience.

I value your participation and thank you for the commitment of time, energy, and effort. If you have any further questions before signing the participation consent form, I can be reached at 441-591-3135 or ecw2147@tc.columbia.edu.

With warm regards,

Eric C. West

Appendix C: Interview Protocols

Onboarding Protocol

Q1. Have you ever had an experience like this before?
Q2. What thoughts and/or feelings come to mind as you enter this co-creation?
Q3. What makes you feel/think this way?
Q4. What are your hopes about this experience? What are your fears about this experience? What are your expectations for this experience?
    Q4a.What is it that you think influences these hopes/fears/expectations?
Q5. If you had to guess - What are some things that you think will come up as you enter this experience? How do you think it will go/what will happen?

Process Questions

Q1. Take me through the last week since we last spoke. What stands out about the experience for you thus far? Tell me about your journey together with your co-creator.
Q2. Can you describe what you are learning during this experience of co-creation, if anything?
    Q2a. If yes - Can you describe that further?
    Q2b. If no - Did you bump into something that challenged the way you normally do things?
Q3. What has been most easy? Conversely, what has been the most difficult?
Q4. Has anything been surprising to you so far?
Q5. Can you describe the difference between your experience of creating art with another artist in this study versus creating art individually?
Q6. Can you describe what is essential for me to understand about your experience of making art with another artist thus far? If someone stopped you in the street to ask you about this experience of co-creation because they wanted to do it themselves, what would you say?
Q7. How are you feeling about this experience, so far?
    Q7a. What is going on in your mind lately when you let it wander?
    Q7b. If someone were you for the day, what would they be thinking or feeling?
Q8. Can you describe what you are taking away from your experience of making art with another artist so far?
Q9. What is my presence doing, if anything?
Q10. Do you have anything else you'd like me to know about your experience?

Exit Interview

Q1. What events or moments stand out for you as important from this experience of co-creation? Please describe instances from the beginning, middle, and end.
Q2. I am trying to create a description of the experience of co-creating art for someone who has not lived it, how would you describe it to someone that has not experienced it themselves?
Q3. What was easy? Most difficult?
Q4.Can you describe how your thinking about making art with another artist might have changed as a result of this experience?

Q4a. If yes - Will you describe how you know that or what you think has changed?
Q4a1. If yes - Will you give me some evidence of that?
Q4b. If no - Can you say more about that?

Q5. What new vantage point has this given you? What is different now? If at all?
Q6. What does it mean to have experienced this? What have you learned?
Q7: Can you describe what role art has played for you during this health crisis, if any?

Q7a: Is this what you expected?
Q7ai: If no – Can you elaborate on that? What would be important for someone to know about creating art during times like these?
Q7aii: If yes – Can you tell me how you came to know that?

Q8. If you had to do it again, what might you do differently, if anything, and why?
Q9. Any last thoughts? What would be important for me to understand?

Appendix D: Collection of Artifacts by Duo 1

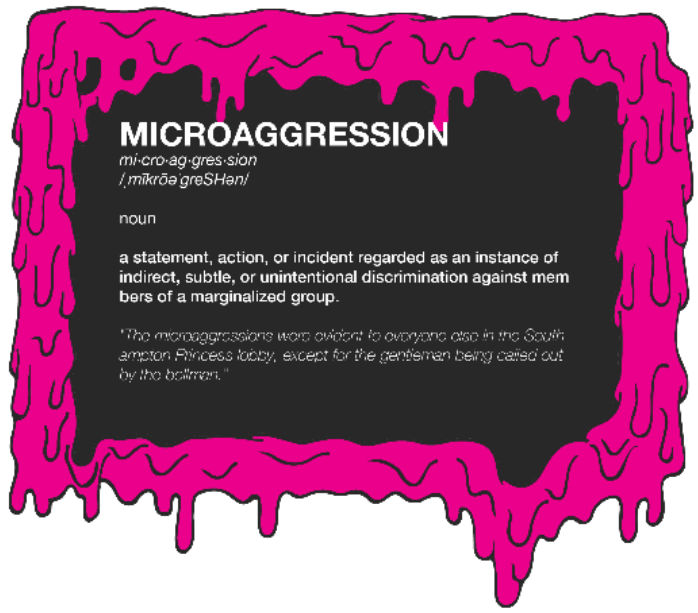
Artifact 1

Appendix E: Collection of Artifacts by Duo 2

Displayed in random order.

Artifact 2

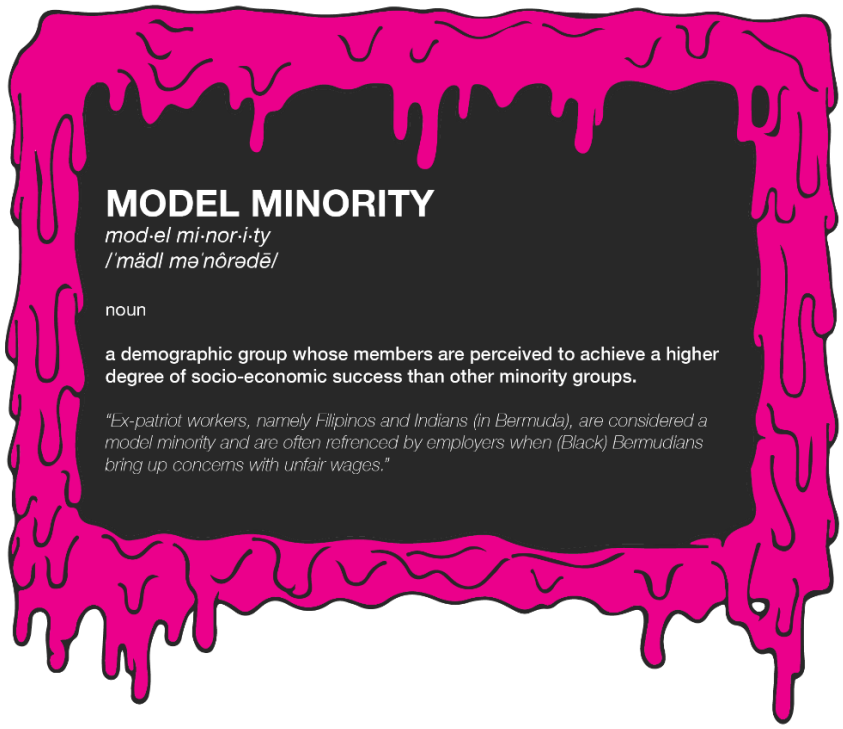
Artifact 3



Artifact 6

Artifact 7

Artifact 8


MODEL MINORITY
mod·el mi·nor·i·ty
/ˈmädl məˈnôrədē/
noun
a demographic group whose members are perceived to achieve a higher degree of socio-economic success than other minority groups.
"Ex-patriot workers, namely Filipinos and Indians (in Bermuda), are considered a model minority and are often refrenced by employers when (Black) Bermudians bring up concerns with unfair wages."

Appendix F: Collection of Artifacts by Duo 3

Displayed by medium

Artifact 9

Artifact 10

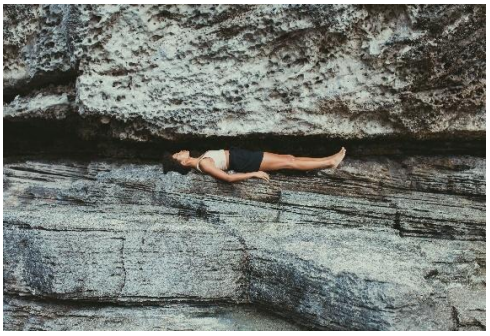
Artifact 11

Artifact 12

Artifact 4

Artifact 14

Artifact 15

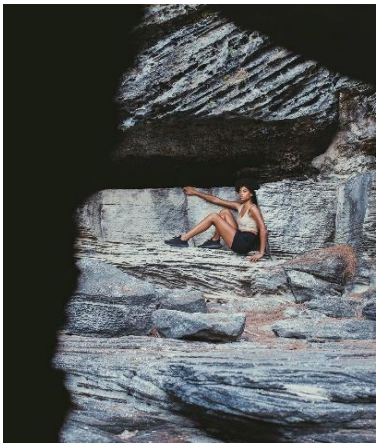


Artifact 16

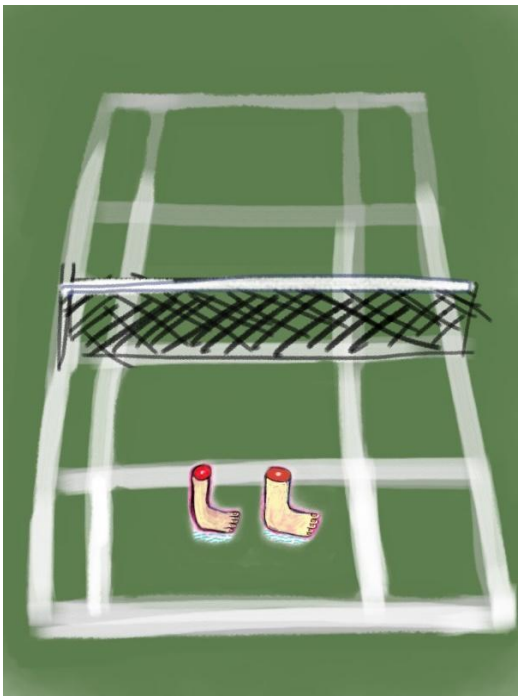
Artifact 17

Artifact 18

Artifact 19

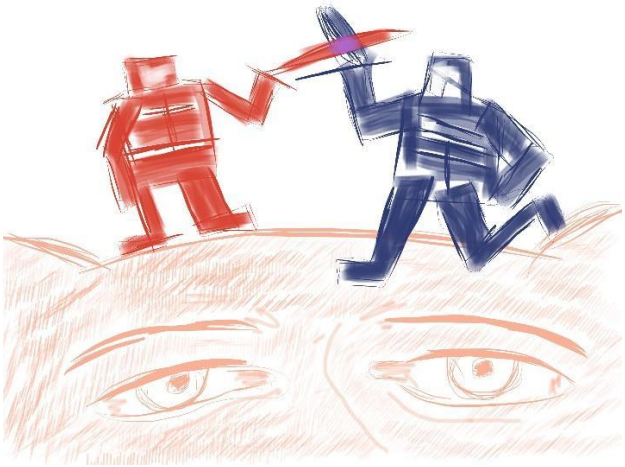


Artifact 20



Artifact 21

Artifact 22



Artifact 23

Artifact 24

Artifact 5

Appendix G: Themes from Portraits Sourced from Duos

Emergent Themes	*Illustrative Quotes*
Relationship and Connection	I realized that intimacy and tangibility are important for me to create art. (Keyon) But I'm finding that sort of the interpersonal relations between her and I is sort of the biggest part of it. (Dana) I think it's much more a bonding experience than what I've had in the past. In the past it was, "Oh, yeah, you have an idea and I have an idea and I'll help with your idea." The sort of more of a sacrifice kind of, whereas this is yeah, like it's a sort of bonding and I mean, it's sort of personal. I mean, you're sharing kind of a personal study, just we're sharing quite personal habits and ways that we work. (Lily) It's forced me to, I guess, look at Nathaniel a little closer. I am more impressed with his...I think it was more impressive the way he really put the...The experience has just further emphasized for me of his genuine love for what he does. And I hope that he sees that as well with me. (Anthony) [I] feel less alone in [my] own practice of art...I didn't expect that. (Lily) It's been great to have another professional artist to kind of talk to, so that. And I think it will have created a bond that we'll probably work together now sort of going forward. I can see the ideas from this project, I don't think are going to go away. I think we'll just keep working with them. If that makes sense. (Lily) Who knows when the next time will be when I'll [get the chance to] collaborate with somebody on an equal footing. (Chris) Because we knew each other a little, but not really well when we started the project, it's sort of the professional and the personal is all kind of in one and I really quite, I like that fact that I feel like my relationship with her as a person. It's very much based around us as being artists and I really liked that and I enjoy that with her...I feel like in a way I'm just sort of surprised just how quickly in a way she's sort of become one of my creative people. You know, sort of one of my touchstones. So that's,

Emergent Themes	*Illustrative Quotes*
	yeah, that's been a little surprising. (Dana) So far, it's the sense of camaraderie. It's good to know that someone else believes in something and takes something as seriously and wants to do something as much as I do. I think we've talked before about how the human perspective is isolating, so it's the opposite of that. It's like, "Oh, right, this dude gets it, we're on the same page." We're working towards something together instead of getting in each other's way. So that's all very enriching. (Nathaniel)
Context and Structure	It just makes me aware that I don't have an endless amount of time to play with, even though I think there's a good bit of time for this project. (Keyon) I think because getting caught up in that cycle of perfectionism, I mean, it's all too common for me. So, this is why I try to execute things as fast as I possibly can, so I don't get caught up in that cycle. (Chris) So, I think that's been the most challenging, is just to say sort of like, 'Okay, I need to put some time aside just to focus on this.' But I think that's true with everything at the moment. (Dana) Distance does something that I have to take into consideration when creating...staying dialed in is a whole lot more difficult...because you're feeding off of each other's energy, it's tangible, it's real. (Keyon) COVID restricted our movements literally, so we couldn't... we could have had these great ideas and then say, "Oh, we'll jump in our cars tomorrow, meet each other and make something literally" or arrange stuff we have and maybe because we were definitely going through that, like, "oh, I'll come to your studio, you have a load of stuff there we could then photograph and manipulate and just make something physically right there." So, we didn't have the opportunity to do that, although we definitely had that idea. (Lily) There's much more flow and fluid and it feels a shame to put a deadline because the ideas are, you just kind of have to let things develop. But that said, the things won't develop unless... they won't develop in any reasonable time frame unless we put a deadline on it (Lily) I believe this was a bit just disconnected because of relying on the devices, trying to consider the pandemic and associated loss as well as the timeliness of my MacBook screen actually going to kaput. (Chris)

Emergent Themes	*Illustrative Quotes*
	I know that I am unrealistic when it comes to deadlines and things. And I feared that maybe she and I are similar in some ways. And so I think early on, we were almost a little bit dreamy, and not in a good way..... It doesn't feel like it has a ending, which I think is a good thing with art. (Dana) We have had a lot of time, and so I think we misuse the time by not preparing ourselves in the most efficient way sometimes. (Dana) So I guess, actually, the real answer would be, it offered me structure because doing this project and helping other people with their projects [as an art teacher] gave me a reason to go to bed because I have to be ready for the next day. (Nathaniel)
Seeing Differently	The whole point of doing collaboration is to change, to get out of your mechanisms, to change your perspective and change what you were doing. So, change itself is the goal. (Nathaniel) I'd say my vantage point has changed, not just on collaborating with someone, but also the fact that we're creating work that was in response to our situation. (Dana) Oh, collaboration gives me access to another person's perspective I wouldn't normally have. That gives me the opportunity to see from that perspective, which gets me out of my mind, which makes up part of the bigger whole and the bigger reality than I was before. Yeah, it's weird to call it new because I've been saying for a long time that there's a difference between knowing and knowing and it's weird. (Nathaniel) I haven't specifically spoken to her [Lily] about how this period and this project with her is [but] it's making me reassess how I kind of conceive of my working practice. (Dana) I used to have these hard fast ideas about when you're making art, and I guess if it translates into your audience or not... but yeah, I guess I also learned that... or I got a better sense that my artwork is valid. It's definitely shifted my perspective in a positive direction. I think [co-creation] is more worthwhile for me. Actually, a lot more than more worthwhile. I think it's almost essential that I integrate it into my practice. (Lily)

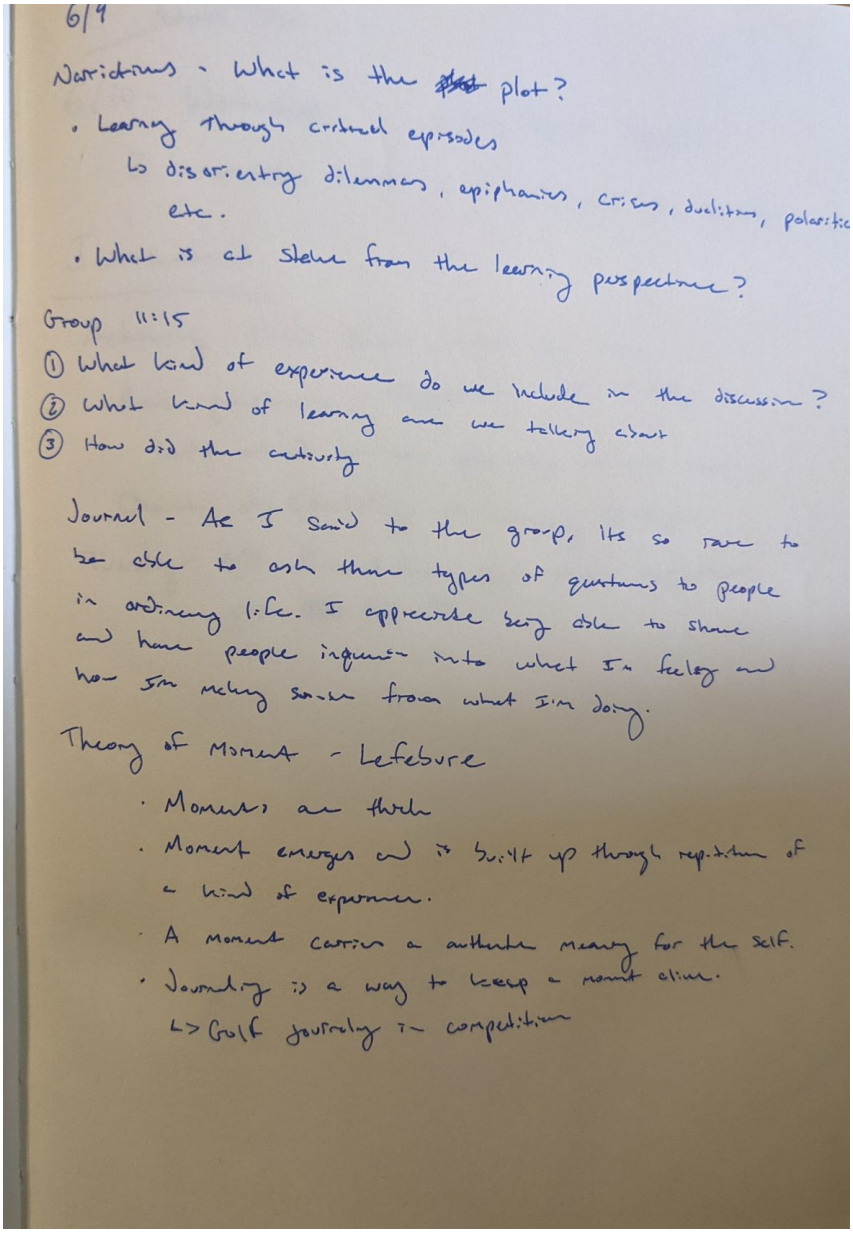
Emergent Themes	*Illustrative Quotes*
	The idea was that we were meeting each other across a great distance and projecting our understanding of the other. So we were meeting our idea of the other person. There was a table in the foreground, which went to the other person sitting at the table. So the idea is that when you look at each individual piece, you replace the other one of us meeting us at the table. So you feel like you were able or you feel like you were seeing what I saw when I came to the table. The table was both meeting ground, sort of a shared space symbolically and emotionally, as well as bridge to bridge the space between the two people, between us. (Nathaniel) So, it was really neat to learn something about something that I felt I already knew everything about...Like re-seeing. Yes, yes. A re- seeing what you've...It's like finding Waldo because you've been looking at it all that time, and it's like, "Ah! There it is." Or connecting two dots that you didn't realize connected. (Nathaniel)
Developing Creative Rhythms	So I think the end result actually becomes more of an informed work because in this sharing process, in this co-creation, two brains are better than one. And there may be considerations that you may have never gotten to learn. (Anthony) It's like one of those moments when something clicked. It's kind of like, I don't know, you've been surrounded by this flower that you're growing in a greenhouse or something, and then you find out it cures COVID, but you've been living with it all that fucking time. You've been great, and you survived the whole thing. You're like, "What's wrong with everybody?" But then you figure it out. So here's this like revealing of what you actually are already doing and participating and seeing it for what it really is, I guess, instead of taking it for granted. (Nathaniel) I feel really good, actually. It has ignited a great deal of optimism, but also a mutual understanding in regards to change, and creating work that we don't collectively understand, but try to understand. (Keyon) We get a good bit of work done. We go through this really great creative catharsis. Yeah, because you're feeding off of each other's energy, it's tangible, it's real. (Keyon) I think, subconsciously, images just sort of [started to] flow out. And they did, it was like it was as good as going for a walk or for a swim, you felt like you've done something productive and you have an image that you can talk about or not, we didn't end up talking about them, but - well maybe a little bit, we just started joking and laughing about them. (Lily) Yeah, Dana and I sort of yin and yang. (Lily)

Emergent Themes	*Illustrative Quotes*
	There was this one conversation where it just all came together, and we were vibing, so to speak, in terms of working together. And so in a way it was super emblematic of doing this whole project under these circumstances because it was great, and it was positive, and I'm pretty certain we both felt energized, and we both felt inspired. (Dana)
Finding agreements	We have similar aesthetics and conceptual foundations. So, it was never really hard, It's just always kind of finding that happy medium in that creation. (Keyon) I think research has been a little difficult...Patience and... And I think trying to find the middle ground between what we both want. Trying to practice diplomacy as well as, "Hey, this is really important to me. So can we come to a stalemate of source," I suppose? Or, not a stalemate, but an agreement. (Chris) You have to let a little bit of yourself go and kill your darlings, but actually, that's probably a good thing, at the inception stage particularly. I'm inadvertently editing, in my mind, ideas and things because I know it would never work with her. So, I think it forces you to challenge yourself a bit. So, I think that's a good thing to...for me at least. So, that's a good thing to know. And then, also, that it's a slower process...But it's also quite invigorating. (Dana) As a photographer and an artist, being in her space and seeing it and interacting with her, then all the juicy details that I love as a portrait photographer to like... I find out what her story is by seeing it, so that's been kind of torturous in a way because it's like I normally am in it taking the pictures, even if they're just sketches. (Dana) I think you... almost like getting into a relationship, a romantic relationship, you have to kind of feel out the person a little bit. There's a certain amount of sort of, well, are we connected in any way in similar ideas or are we always going to be battling each other? Or is that good that we're battling each other? (Lily) Yeah, I think that's the main thing is you're listening to what the other is saying, seeing if that connects with your idea in any way. And then I guess there's a true comparison contrast with if we could use that when it might say something differently. Dana and I did come to the conclusion yesterday. (Lily) We needed to figure out what we wanted to say. Like you do with any

Emergent Themes	*Illustrative Quotes*
	piece of artwork. Oh, what's the point? What are we doing this for? So we thought we should do, between this week and next week, we'll try and be a bit more synced with, "Okay, well you were trying to say this. I'm trying to say that." I think we're fairly close. (Lily) I'm sure that it's going to be an enjoyable experience of somehow finding that sweet spot in between. Not that you're compromising, but you're trying to take the best of both approaches or opinions or perspectives to create this new thing. That sounds exciting to me. (Anthony) I'm looking forward to it...I expect to share my ideas with Anthony, and have them challenged, and produce something new from the contrast of our perspectives that wouldn't have existed if either one of us tried to make it. (Nathaniel) We're just in the trenches all the time, talking about this piece that we were creating. (Keyon) I think we followed an honest process. We shared ideas of interest for each of us. There is how they overlapped or where they overlapped, and then focused on that. And developed that and then choose a way to bring that about. The end results may be different if we did it again, but that may be based on other circumstances. (Anthony)
Learning in Partnership	Yeah, the interesting thing about real learning is that it feels more like remembering when it happens. I think that's when it actually clicks, like your brain accepts it. Maybe you've been trying to learn it for a long time, but it reaffirms or it clicks. (Nathaniel) I mean, a slower pace will ultimately make me think more about what I'm doing. (Chris) I'd say my vantage point has changed, not just on collaborating with someone, but also the fact that we're creating work that was in response to our situation. (Dana) I guess in the beginning, I think one of the things that was really good was just diving back into the work of creativity. I think that was profoundly beneficial for me, apart from the very healthy conversations I was having about art and life. (Keyon) Yeah, it was really cool learning something about composition and that's really great at my age and position to realize I'm open to learning

Emergent Themes	*Illustrative Quotes*
	because I preach that shit, but to actually do it is pretty fucking cool. Yeah, I found that I've... What was the question? Yes, I learned some shit and I enjoyed it. (Nathaniel) If I'm learning anything, it's because Nathaniel and I have chosen to use basically each other as subjects, which I guess is making us to think more about what we think of the other. (Anthony). So, I've learned that...I used to have these hard fast ideas about when you're making art, and I guess if it translates into your audience or not... but yeah, I guess I also learned that...or I got a better sense that my artwork is valid. (Lily) So, I definitely have learned a lot from it. It's been a very positive experience for me, more than anything, just to remind myself that I cannot isolate myself like I do, and I can't work in this little individual bubble. I have to collaborate with others...I think maybe the fact that, as an individual, and as an artist, and as a creator, I think I'm quite institutionalized. (Dana) And so, yeah, I'm learning that if you're kind of open to others or you're open to just sort of changing your mindset, then you might come up with something that's even more impactful or beautiful or whatever you're trying to do in your work. (Dana)

Appendix H: Reflexive Journal



6/9

Narratives - What is the ~~plot~~ plot?

- Learning through critical episodes
  - to disorienting dilemmas, epiphanies, crises, dualisms, polarities etc.
- What is at stake from the learning perspective?

Group 11:15

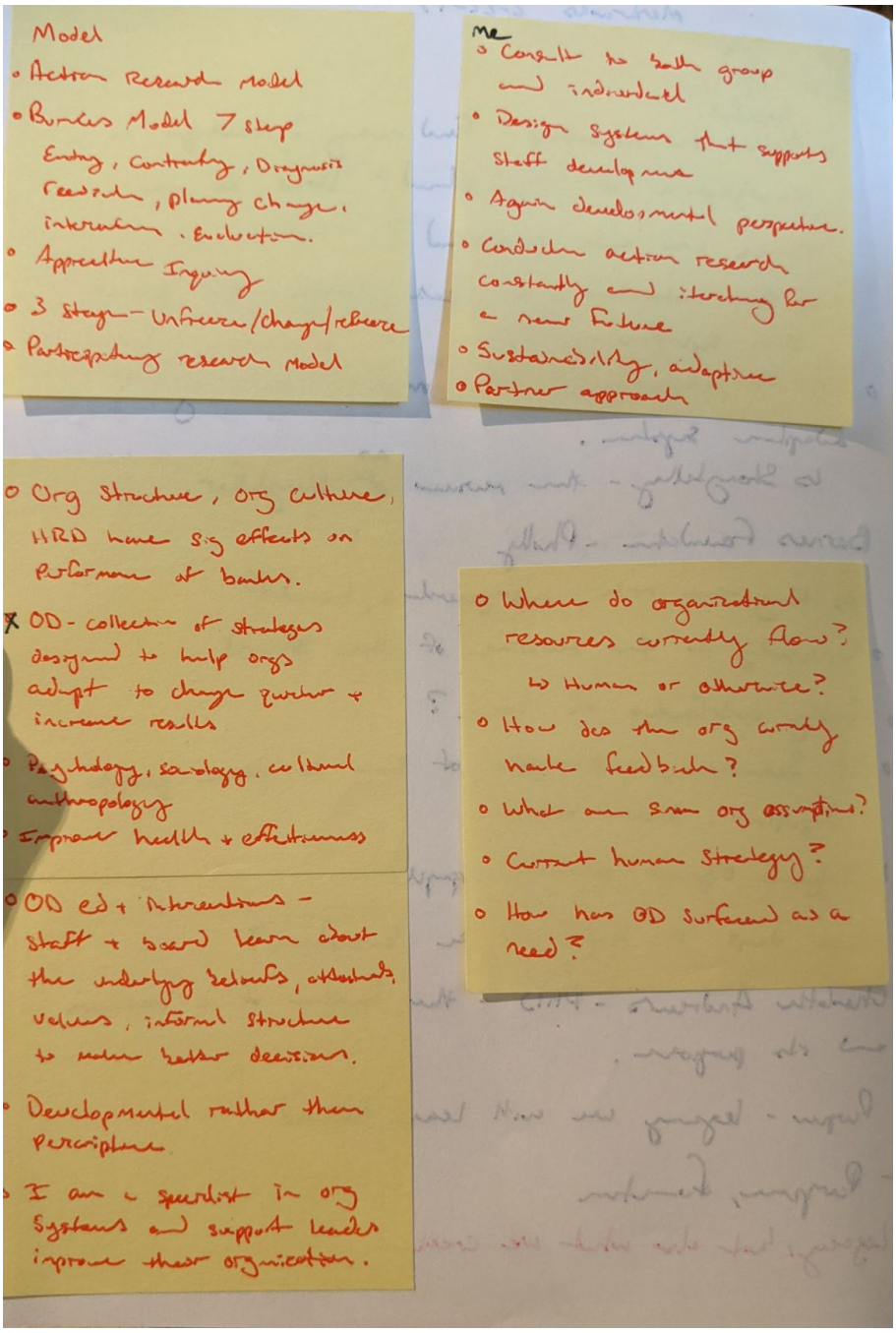
① What kind of experience do we include in the discussion?
② What kind of learning are we talking about
③ How did the curiosity

Journal - As I said to the group, its so rare to be able to ask these types of questions to people in ordinary life. I appreciate being able to share and have people inquire into what I'm feeling and how I'm making sense from what I'm doing.

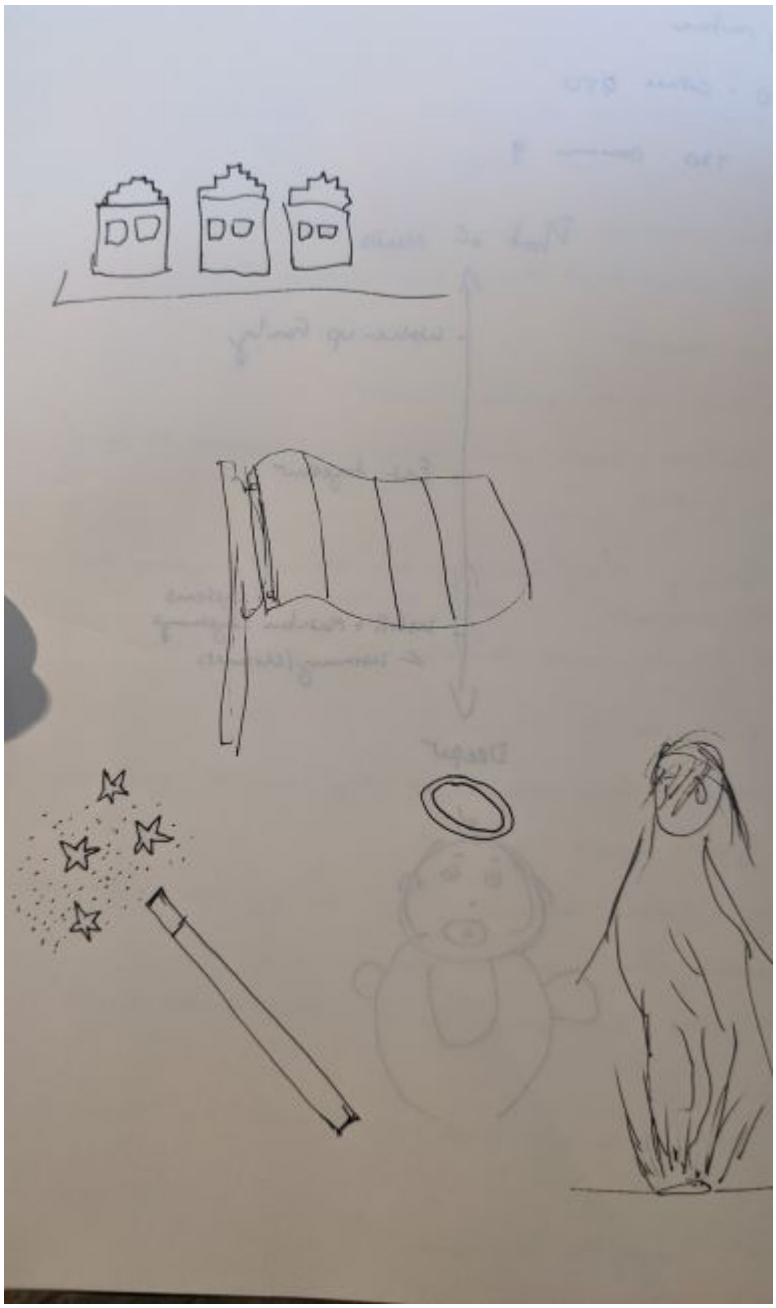
Theory of Moment - Lefebvre

- Moments are thick
- Moment emerges and is built up through repetition of a kind of experience.
- A moment carries a authentic meaning for the self.
- Journaling is a way to keep a moment alive.
  - <> Golf journaling != competition

Reflexive Journal: Post-It Notes



Reflexive Journal: Drawing



Reflexive Journal-Exemplary Only

July 29th, 2020

I received the finished art from [redacted] and had an exit interview with [redacted] today.

During the conversation I was remembering my time with [redacted], a Bermudian artist, and

how I thought that his art was an example of how to bring people together.

- Bracketing - Value statement and interpretation through a white, male lens. Additionally, the focus is on the experience here agnostic of value. Remain on the sideline and acknowledge your embeddedness. Why do I feel pulled into the interpretation of the piece? The description should come through their experiences, not through my interpretation or what they should/might/ought to have said.

What does it mean to be Bermudian? What is Bermuda art? Is it art about bermuda?

- Bracketing - Why don't I ask them? More importantly, why is this important to me in this study as a researcher? To me as a person? Are they talking about this or am I extrapolating? Even so, why is nationality important here? Will I draw on cultural differences? If so, how will I notice these in the data? What have they said they led me to believe that their experience was culturally significant?

Purpose - the legacy we will leave behind...but also what we create today that will be the gift that

gets passed down.

When we start talking about purpose, we also need to think about function. What function does

the art institution serve? What is it doing to these artists? How does it frame what art I view,

what art they create?

- Bracketing - What do they say about the institution? It is clear that I think the institution plays a significant role, but what do they think? What do they say about it? Why does purpose matter in this case? What are they saying about their art pieces irrespective of how I feel about it? Do they view it in isolation? As part of a bigger whole? Do they care at all? Why should they care? I am noticing that my lens is clouded by what is curated for me. Maybe I'm a lazy art viewer, I want the curated experience. Art creation seems more messy, more chaotic. What will I do with this noticing, this awareness?

In speaking with [redacted] there was also the sense that co-creation is "low" art as compared to "high" art. This is my assumption of course that they feel this way, but I was surprised about how high the quality of art was that these local artists produced. It might be the case that we need to nurture and develop local artists more and start to educate Bermuda as to why their art is important, give them a platform.

- Bracketing - Again, joining. I need to stay subject/subject rather than subject/object. What did they say that indicated this relationship between low/high art here? Why is that significant in the scheme of this study? How does that help me to understand the artist's experience? Were they surprised by what they created or is it just me? What will I do with this feeling of being "surprised?" Will I over state the significance of their experience or let the experience speak for itself? The task is not to feel surprised, but to ask if they are surprised and to probe why this might be. Then I can report it as it is.

July 29th, 2020 – Exit Interview

Notes taken during interview with Nathaniel.

- Vulnerability and emotionality.
    - Sense of his discussion about his relationship with Anthony. What else might he be saying? How am I interpreting emotions? Cannot see his expressions through the phone. Can sound be reliable to convey expression?
- Tethered us-ness / one-ness.
    - While this is word for word, what does his partner Anthony think? Reminder to note this during his exit interview also. Can only be tethered if they both agree?
- Strong collaboration, what's happening?
    - Why do I think this is strong rather than weak? What are my criteria? This is not a performance rated exercise so can the experience stand on its own?
- Transcends the task.
    - How so? What was it that was transcending? The relationship? Meaning that was made? Does co-creation stand apart from the art product? What does it say about the process?
- Collaboration greater than just 1-on-1.
    - How so? What more is there? What is the "greater" variable here?
- Collaboration is a filter for the universe.
    - Search back to what filer he was applying, was it his universe or also Anthony? How did this co-creation become extended to the lifeworld outside of the task? In which ways? Do others feel this way in the study?
- Co-created art as legitimate "knowing together" beyond rationality.
    - Knowing together, is there the inference of mutuality or bi-direction here? I wonder how Anthony would describe this. Is this the same as knowing individually? Possible during individual creation also or is this unique here?

- Bracketing note – while these were the items that I wrote down during the conversation, note why I paid attention to these items. Why not others? What did you dismiss as unimportant? Remember to read the transcript later without looking at these notes to see if I have the same attention to these markers. If they are different, what might this delta be due to? When I am listening, what is it that I tend to listen to more often rather than less often? Is there are relationship within the less attended to?